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High Performance Coach Education: A Symbolic Interactionist Perspective

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requirements of the Manchester Metropolitan University
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Abstract

This thesis focuses on the experiences of those individuals involved in the formation, consumption, management, and delivery of the United Kingdom Coaching Certificate Coach Level 4 (UKCC CL4) award. An ethnographically inspired fieldwork engagement of 18 months followed cohorts of UKCC CL4 coaches from British Canoeing and British Judo as they undertook this education journey.

This research comes at a time when UK sporting agencies have invested considerable resources into elite coach education and have established novel relationships with Higher Education institutions (HEi) to assist in the delivery of such programmes. Despite this investment, there is a scarcity of empirically informed studies detailing the processes undertaken. Little is understood in terms of what aspirations, thoughts, fears, and beliefs the participants have had, which includes an understanding of the problems and contradictions inherent in the UKCC CL4 award itself.

Over 50 interviews with coaches, course tutors, Governing Body (GB) staff and sports organisations' personnel were conducted; the data gleaned from these were analysed using the theories inherent in the writings of traditional symbolic interactionists, such as Blumer (e.g. Blumer, 1946; 1969), Cooley (e.g. Cooley, 1907; 1910; 1918), Mead (Mead, 1934), and Strauss (e.g. Strauss, 1959; 1978).

Findings indicate that there are three main areas of significance: that the individuals responsible for the management of the relationship between the sport GB and the HEi partner are of central importance; that over the period of the UKCC CL4 award, well thought out and constructed links between the theoretical aspects covered in the delivery and practice of coaches resulted in stronger levels of attainment; and, that a number of the coaches completing the UKCC CL4 programme developed an ongoing desire for further academic educational experience having established a strong commitment to personal development. The significance of this work is that it provides empirically informed guidelines for the development of similar coach education programmes at home in the UK and abroad by privileging the views and experiences of those participants directly involved in high performance coach education.

Chapter 1. Me and my doctoral research - “Skating on thin ice”¹

This chapter aims to introduce and position myself as a female early-career researcher, figure skater, and Croatian, who has perceived her doctoral study as an educating, challenging and emotional experience (Herman, 2010). The completion of my PhD has represented an unpredictable journey that required me to confront things I possibly knew, but preferred not to acknowledge and address. Presenting such personal thoughts at the start of this thesis is important to me to give insight into the challenges I have overcome and still face. To this end, I will draw upon reflections of experiences that, I believe, informed my sense of self, identity and belonging in order to contextualise the understandings I have developed over the course of my research.

In September 2014, I started my doctoral study on high performance coach education and learning in the UK. At the time, things seemed to fly past me – I was preparing my final presentation to complete my Masters degree and, concurrently, I was proposing my PhD research. I was determined to launch myself into this new postgraduate format of study and in my naturally keen, almost naïve way, I convinced myself that I was comfortable with all the responsibilities that my PhD would render. I felt privileged to have parents, who enabled me to study abroad and grateful to work with university staff, who supported my academic goals. From the outset, I aimed to adapt to my new surroundings, as I felt that I would show a lack of appreciation to my parents, myself, and my supervisory team, if I admitted to my insecurities. Today, I recognise that I was blind to the challenges I would experience throughout my research. Particularly my PhD fieldwork unsheathed my instilled desire for certainty,

¹ Parts of this chapter were published online as a guest blog by Taylor & Francis Author services. A copy of this can be found in Appendix 1 of this thesis.

my fear of exclusion and my expectation of imminent adaptability to new situations, features that Colombo (2010) considered particularly common among children, who migrate at an early stage in life.

In 1991; I was two years old, when my parents left their birth country to start a better life in Austria with my sister Paola² and me. Mum and Dad were raised in Zagreb, the capital of Croatia, where they intended to settle down with their children. Having completed their university studies with outstanding results, my mum, a law professional, and my dad, a civil engineer, entered an occupational system that did not award academically trained professionals the financial rewards they hoped. In the 1980s, Croatia (at the time part of Yugoslavia) suffered from economic and political instability, which culminated in Civil War in the early 1990s (Kalyvas and Sambanis, 2005). In light of these developments and a professional opportunity for my dad, we emigrated in 1991. Contrary to my parents' intentions, our move was rushed. My mum recollects the situation as follows:

The plan was that your dad moves to Linz (Austria), finds an apartment, saves money for a bit. You, Paola and I would join him after a couple of months. However, your grandad [Mum's dad] urged us to move all together. He didn't like the idea of us being separated. We packed everything we could fit into our car and left on the Friday morning. We found out later that the government closed the Croatian borders at 12:00 that same day. (My mum's words)

Despite the uncertainty of leaving Croatia with two children and limited German vocabulary, my parents tend to recall their experiences of our search for security and stability in a matter-of-fact fashion. Today, I believe this is their mechanism to control

² Throughout this thesis, I honour the wishes of the individuals I have written about, who were asked at the start of the research engagement whether they wish their real names to be used (Appendix 4). Accordingly, I changed some names, while others have been kept. Further detail regarding my approach to informed consent can be found in thesis chapter 4.

their own inner turmoil and fear and represents a manifestation of their deep-rooted desire to protect Paola and me (Svašek, 2010). Driven by the priority to adjust to our new surroundings in Linz, there was no time for nostalgia; it has been important to my parents that we focused on the present and our future (Colombo, 2010). New to the local culture and language, Mum and Dad feared bullying and exclusion from native Austrians for Paola and me (Valenta, 2009). Mum recalls an incident that occurred when I was three years old; I had just started to visit kinder garden. When she spoke about this experience, she explained in Croatian:

There was a boy, who bullied you. He mocked you for not speaking German like the other children. Sometimes, you cried about it at home, because it upset you. So, then I told you that, next time when he says something mean, you should just respond in Croatian. Then, he will be the one, who cannot respond in the language you use. (My mum's words)

I did as I was told and Mum was right; the bullyboy stopped mocking me. This advice is one of many examples of how Mum expressed her strong sense of protectiveness. She has always regarded it her duty to equip Paola and me with suggestions and solutions. My mum's proactivity was also key in raising us in a bilingual manner; Paola and I consider German our second mother tongue, parallel to which we have always spoken Croatian and adhered to Croatian customs in our home in Linz. Indeed, I write this PhD thesis in my third language. My family became, what Schiller et al. (1995) defined, "transmigrants", adapting to Austrian culture, while preserving the inherent values of our home nation. Little did I know that some twenty years later, I would again become a "transmigrant". This time, this occurred among doctoral researchers. One day, I sat at my desk in my office, listening to my peers, whose workspaces were in the rooms adjacent to mine and I put my feelings to paper:

There is a new vibe on the research corridor. Last year, I found the chatter nicer because two girls were in daily. They have finished their PhDs. The new students are friendly but they are all based in the biophysical sciences. On a daily basis, I am the lone qualitative researcher, who works on our research corridor. Some of them started shouting, "Let's do science people!" Then, they would use all these words that sound complicated and speak about their invasive data collection techniques, whilst I smile, listen and crumble on the inside. They study sedentary behaviour, stroke rehabilitation, genetic disposition of elite athletes; they take blood and validate machines. It feels intimidating. I feel that there is no one, whom I could have my own chats about qualitative research. (Reflexive notes taken at Manchester Metropolitan University in October 2015)

These experiences led me to feel lonely and insecure (Janta et al., 2014). Most of my peers conducted their research in biomechanics, physiology or psychology and, at times, I felt that they were unable to relate to my challenges as a qualitative researcher. While I appreciate that my colleagues did not intend to exclude me, their remarks restated that I spoke a different language. I felt as though I was taken back to the days when a three-year old ridiculed my limited German vocabulary. I struggled to find the social support I was seeking among my peers because my research language separated me from conversations (Haynes et al., 2012).

Adapting to new surroundings was easier in the 1990s, when my parents guided Paola and me in using various language patterns to integrate ourselves in Austrian public spaces, a process that Lam and Warriner (2012) defined as polycentric practices. At home, we would converse in Croatian with our passionate, loud temper. In public, our voices have been and continue to be calm, so we can speak German or fall silent, when we believe that it is time to not to draw attention to ourselves. This has represented our way of balancing the '...sets of codes...' that differ between our native culture and Austrian traditions (Valenta, 2009:367). In retrospect of my PhD study, I suggest that I conducted myself in a similar manner when I started to engage in my research

environments, where I desired to find commonalities with coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers. In conversation, I steered away from characteristics that distinguished me from them, such as my role as a doctoral researcher or the accent I have when I speak English. Instead, I drew attention to my experiences as a former athlete and coach.

The engagement in the sport figure skating started as a way of occupying me after school to enable my parents a commitment to full-time employment. Over the years, figure skating became my way of defining myself; it became everything. It all started with a weekly visit to the local ice rink in Linz, where I was in a group of twenty children, who learned to skate. I was about eight years old when my parents were approached by the Head Coach of my club, who suggested that I joined the competitive group. We accepted and by the time I was eleven, my training per week had increased to up to 15-20 hours. I was too little to remember how I felt, but I can picture that my parents were ecstatic; Figure skating was adding something to my ideas of self and identity without real connection to my cultural roots and feelings of ethnicity. Today, I believe that Mum and Dad saw my increased involvement in figure skating as a milestone in removing myself from the risk of being affected by the exclusion my parents have been keen to avoid since the day we arrived in Austria (Valenta, 2009).

Our Head Coach, Dimitri, and his colleague, Natasha, both Russian, were raised, educated and had coached in their home country. Discipline and hard work were cultural traits they instilled in their athletes, yet to me, such qualities were not new. From an early age, my parents taught Paola and me the importance of hardworking and well-organised conduct. This is why I always regarded my coaches' views as

professional and realistic despite their stern façades and their emphasis on performance. Yet, it was my parents' views that, I feel, changed when my participation in figure skating increased to a competitive level. Over the years, I have come to understand that Mum and Dad held good intentions, but I often felt under pressure, particularly in my teenage years (Gucciardi et al., 2012). At this time, a heaviness overpowered my enthusiasm for figure skating. I felt oddly out of place at home and believed that my parents had internalised such high expectations that I would anger them, if I did not meet my performance goals. I remember vividly a conversation with my dad following an unexpectedly poor competition result. Over dinner, he said:

If you train hard, then it should lead to a result. If there is no result, how do we [him and my mother] know you are really working hard? (My dad's words)

At approximately 13 years of age, I was unable to comprehend what he meant; his words seemed harsh and unfair. Mum attempted to ease her frustrations by raising her voice at me, and at times, my coaches. Today, I realise that I was not fair to myself either, because I held on to my poor performances, unable to forgive myself for the mistakes I had made on ice. I developed a "love and hate" relationship with figure skating, which I recognised years later, in my feelings towards my PhD. My concerns over what would happen if I acted upon considerations, such as "*What if I said to Mum and Dad that I did not want to skate any longer? Is this what I want?*" or "*What would people say, if they found out how reluctant I felt about my PhD fieldwork?*" prevented me from attempting to cope with my thoughts.

Left in a state of paralysis and trapped in a dark place in my head, I would feel unhappy, stuck and unable to voice my fears. I found comfort at the ice rink, where I laughed with my closest friends and knew that no immediate consequences would

follow, if practices did not go as well as I hoped. I enjoyed the strong bond that my best friends and I, all figure skaters, felt; our daily routines were so similar that we established common understandings and a shared language. At the ice rink, I succeeded to let go of pressure and I felt I could be, who I believed I was, “the figure skater Petra”. I have defined myself as a figure skater for many years, and I still do, certainly, every time I watch a competition. I realise now how truly important this has been to me – it was the first attribute I told strangers when I introduced myself, followed by saying that I was a Croatian living in Austria or, now, the UK.

Contradictory, the isolated nature of my PhD journey often felt lonely; I missed the belonging and shared sense of identity that I had enjoyed as a figure skater among my friends (Janta et al., 2014). My insecurities intensified whenever I was about to travel to or when I returned from a data collection site. I can now admit that I felt helpless.

On a grey January day, another block of data collection ahead of me, I wrote:

I am about to take another train to another data collection venue. This time I will be away for four days. First, Sheffield, then Stirling. I do not feel I can do it this time. It is too much to pack, carry and do at once. I will be alone most of the time. It seems like a nightmare. I feel ridiculous though, embarrassed about my feelings. I have no idea how others do it ... I struggle. I know it is bad to think it, because I want to do my PhD, but I wish I would not have to do this block of data collection. (Reflexive notes written at home in January 2016)

Desperate wishes to avoid data collection have been recurring companions on days before my engagement in the research field. I knew that it was out of my control how the interactions with coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers would evolve and this sensation frightened me (Lavallee and Robinson, 2007). The structured and performance-orientated life I had led since childhood, enabled me to develop an organised lifestyle, but it also instilled in me a strong drive towards perfection. In my pursuit of becoming “perfect”, I followed a calorie-restricted diet, exercised at least

once a day, carefully scheduled study time and social events days in advance. While this was useful to cope with my busy schedule as a figure skater, it did not fit into my life without sport. I felt anxious and uncomfortable since I viewed data collection days as assessments or performances, which I was unable to prepare for. My readiness to work hard and the urge to plan seemed useless. On my first day of fieldwork, I rushed to sit down in the back of the room following an intimidating five minutes during which I introduced myself:

I was nervous anyway because I knew I had to introduce myself to the person tutoring the coaches. I was unaware how much Nicole³ told them about my work. Turns out, the lecturer, Amanda, had no idea I would be there. She was friendly but obviously hesitant, so I attempted to do this as quickly as possible. I could feel myself burn up bright red, talk quickly. I was embarrassed, because I was unsure whether I am taking up too much time and whether I expressed myself in an acceptable way. I can feel the discomfort as I think about it again. (Reflexive notes written in Sheffield in May 2015)

Two weeks later, it was time to begin data collection on the British Canoeing UKCC CL4 award. This time, I hoped I would feel different; after all, I had exchanged several emails with Lisa⁴, my gatekeeper in this environment, who gave a welcoming first impression. As I was driving to the venue of the residential event, I forced myself to believe that my fastened heartbeat was a sign of excitement. Yet, confidence and optimism vanished with every kilometre I drew nearer to my data collection site. Despite Lisa's genuine and helpful demeanour, I felt insecure and awkward during most of my conversations with participants. This state of mind heightened, when Lisa asked me to reiterate my study to two coaches, who worried about the impact my research could render to their positions in the Governing Body that employed both of

³ Nicole was my gatekeeper on the British Judo UKCC CL4 award. I will return to our relationship in thesis chapter 4. Amanda was one of the lecturers at Sheffield Hallam University, who delivered on the award.

⁴ Lisa was my gatekeeper on the British Canoeing UKCC CL4 award. I will return to our relationship in thesis chapter 4.

them. I was so focussed on construing the meaning of their concerns that I unravelled every spoken word and wrote:

They were friendly, but a little bit cold ... that might just be my interpretation and they are just like this in general but I missed that reassuring smile that would have given me more confidence. I hope this will change gradually. (Field notes written at Yew Lodge Hotel, Kegworth in May 2015)

I did not appreciate that coaches did not know me; here I was, listening, watching, and making notes of the information they shared. In retrospect, I realise that if I had been in the coaches' place, I would have been careful in my acceptance of a researcher, who attended residential events, but did not complete the UKCC CL4 award (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). At the outset of my fieldwork, however, I was unable to look beyond the barriers that I battled with my insecurities. Following two days in my research field on the British Canoeing UKCC CL4 award, I was feeling emotionally exhausted on my journey home. I refused to give myself credit for the observations I had conducted and the dialogues I had led with participants despite my feelings of discomfort. For all I knew at the time, my field notes could have rendered themselves of little value to my PhD.

I was so absorbed in the unhealthy habit of labelling my actions as successes and failures that I developed a hostile relationship with myself. Today, I can admit that I used to struggle to accept myself for who I was. Often, I was unable to enjoy anything but being an athlete, whether this was my role as a student, a daughter, a partner, or a woman. Only as a figure skater, I believed that I knew how to act and think. I was unsure, who I was without my sport and I was unaware of my own interests, strengths, and beliefs (Warriner and Lavalley, 2008). Only during my PhD fieldwork, I realised that what had seemed like a normal way to approach my life had become the biggest

hurdle in completing my research. Following months of low mood and self-pity on days in advance of data collection, I recognised I could no longer continue to bear the feelings of misery and self-loathing. I confronted myself, asking, *“Who am I? Who do I want to be, beyond ‘the figure skater, Petra’?”*

A difficult, however, crucial step was to accept the responsibility for not moving beyond the understanding of myself as a figure skater. Similar to findings by Warriner and Lavalley (2008) in their study with former elite female gymnasts, I had been invested in a sport that controlled my life beyond my on-ice performances. Reports of retired athletes, who ‘...struggled to adjust to the independence afforded by retirement ...because they had never been in control of their own lives...’ resonated with my own barriers in transitioning into my life without figure skating (Warriner and Lavalley, 2008:310). Until I confronted myself with the challenges I faced during my fieldwork, I assumed I would meet my high expectations, if I controlled upcoming situations. Checking restaurant menus and caloric tables represented only two exemplars of former approaches to my preparation. When I was presented with the nature of my PhD fieldwork, which forced me to take things as they come, I suddenly felt vulnerable and unprepared. I was embarrassed about my thoughts and feelings, so I continued to query, *“There must be a better way for me to cope with things. How can I achieve this?”* I can recollect clearly the day I confessed to my partner that I had started to make sense of the apprehensions I associated with my PhD fieldwork. Despite the initial discomfort, it actually felt liberating to voice these thoughts in my own home in the UK, where I content with myself.

I began to give myself credit for the steps I took to progress my PhD research, no matter how slight they were. Before this time, it had been so easy to praise others, but

unimaginable to acknowledge my own accomplishments. Gradually, I have learned that my life is not about perfection and I began to alter the approach to my actions away from a quest for excellence. My learning is ongoing – after all, I have embedded perfectionist traits for many years and I am aware that they will forever remain part of who I am (Lavallee and Robinson, 2007). Today, however, I feel comfortable with situations that lay out of my control. Often, I even find joy in sitting back and letting others take the lead.

The further I progressed on my personal journey, the more I began to see similarities between the concerns that coaches shared with me and the fears I associated with my PhD fieldwork. I felt as though I had created a new capacity to appreciate in greater depth my participants' thoughts, their barriers and feelings at different stages of their learning on the UKCC CL4 award. Uncertainty and insecurity, in particular, were familiar to coaches, especially at the outset of engaging with academic delivery and assessments. Several coaches suggested that this was due to their limited or non-existing experience with reading and writing at university level. Similar to how I felt, when I first joined coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers in UKCC CL4 environments, practitioners in my study commented that it had been daunting to complete the award, because they felt unable to anticipate the academic expectations. I would argue that the parallels I drew between coaches' suggestions and my own thoughts supported me in managing my own concerns. On one occasion, I observed coach learners' frustrations during a residential session and commented:

Actually, I am not the only one, who feels nervous about things. ... Steve explained that he struggled with the lack of support on some modules. Evelyn, who is one of the lecturers on the course, provided him with a timeline to work towards the assignment deadline. This helped Steve when preparing for the assignment on her module. Yet, he then struggled in modules, where tutors did

not provide any guidance at all and did not really respond to his emails. (Field notes written in Loughborough in May 2016)

I forgot my own fears, which allowed me to establish, what Pillow (2010) described, a mutuality in my research “with”, rather than “on” participants. In retrospect, I would argue that particularly coaches and I evolved our understandings of who we were and what we could achieve from our prolonged engagements in UKCC CL4 environments. From recurrent interactions with the award and with each other, I offer that coaches learned to cope with academic delivery and assessments, while I succeeded to manage the ambiguities of my fieldwork.

Today, I feel as though I lifted a weight off my shoulders that did not allow me to value the things around me fully. I am grateful for the challenges my doctoral research has posed and I know now that I never really wished to end my study. My research has been a journey that allowed me to continue my involvement with sport, which has been my passion since the day I stepped onto the ice when I was three years old. The often-daunting fieldwork took me to new locations in the UK, introduced me to different environments and enabled me to interact with diverse groups of people. None of this would have been possible without my extended ethnographically inspired immersion in my research field. I left my comfort zone repeatedly, which prompted me to face my inner sense of belonging and turn personal barriers into features that make me who I am today, “Petra who was a figure skater”. My PhD fieldwork has represented a crucial phase in my life, during which I distanced myself from my search for perfection. I started to take responsibility for my decisions and, most importantly, my happiness. In some measure, I believe that my hard-working character and my determination to demonstrate lingual and cultural adaptability enabled me to persist

and complete my doctoral research despite the rocky road it has represented. The process of writing about my personal thoughts is cathartic and reinforces the understandings I have evolved throughout my PhD (Herman, 2010). I believe that the above-presented reflexions of my sense of self, identity, and belonging lay the foundations for my research, which context I will introduce in the subsequent chapter.

Chapter 2. Research context, aims and research questions

Introduction

I will now turn to the research and practitioner contexts of my PhD study. First, I will locate my work within the academic literature. With this, I will begin to portray the need for furthering our knowledge in the context of high performance coach education and learning. Notably, in the upcoming pages, I will outline insights gained from selected published work, a more extensive and in-depth discussion of which will follow in thesis chapter 3. Moving on in the present chapter, I will introduce the reader to the UKCC CL4 award, which represented the formal coach education programme I studied for the purpose of my doctoral research. This will lead me to identify the research aim and questions I have considered and will be followed by an outline of the significance that my work is hoped to render.

My study in context with the academic literature

Since the early 2000s, research interest has increased in areas of high performance coach education and learning (e.g. Araya et al., 2015; Chesterfield et al., 2010; Consterdine et al., 2013; He et al., 2018; Jones and Allison, 2014; Jones et al., 2003; 2004; Mallett et al., 2016; Mesquita et al., 2014; Phelan and Griffiths, 2018; Rynne et al., 2006; 2010; Townsend and Cushion, 2017; Werthner and Trudel, 2009). Further to this, countries, such as Canada, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom (UK), have made financial investments to establish large-scale coach education programmes in a pursuit to elevate coaching standards and support sports coaching towards becoming a “bona fide” profession (Cassidy and Kidman, 2010). These developments could be related to the recognition of coaches’ significance in overseeing and guiding athletes in training situations, competitive practices and individual development (Trudel et al., 2010). Indeed, it could be argued that coaching practice has become associated with a degree of complexity, which has drawn attention to the education and learning of practitioners (Bowes and Jones, 2006).

Findings from empirical studies tend to demonstrate limited impact of the “formal” situations, often found in classroom-based coach education programmes, particularly when compared to less structured instances of learning, such as those encountered in specialist workshops, peer interactions, and everyday coaching practice (e.g. He et al., 2018; Nash and Sproule, 2009; Werthner and Trudel, 2009; Wiman et al., 2010).

Although formal coach education has been recognised as an integral component of continuous development, largely, coaches seem to associate the content taught in these settings with limited transferability and relevance to their practice (e.g.

Chesterfield et al., 2010; Consterdine et al., 2013; He et al., 2018; Jones and Allison,

2014; Townsend and Cushion, 2017). Practitioners were reported to identify further difficulty when interacting with course tutors, who were perceived to place limited value on the expertise that coaches brought to situations in formal coach education (Mesquita et al., 2014).

To problematize the complexities that coaches associate with their learning in formal situations of high performance coach education, authors have used sociological theorisation to interpret research experiences (Chesterfield et al., 2010; Consterdine et al., 2013; Townsend and Cushion, 2017). While I will attend to this literature in greater depth in thesis chapter 3, I wish to highlight that authors have drawn on dramaturgical interpretations of social life to make sense of coaches self-presentation in situations of coach education and coaching practice (Chesterfield et al., 2010; Consterdine et al., 2013). Moreover, authors have used Bourdieu's theoretical writing to make sense of the issues that practitioners perceived when engaging with course content and when interacting with peer learners in situations of high performance coach education (Townsend and Cushion, 2017). These initial sociological interpretations render fascinating and in-depth insights into the challenges that coaches faced when participating in coach education programmes (Chesterfield et al., 2010; Townsend and Cushion, 2017). Yet, paucity of such studies prevail. This would seem problematic given the important role that coaches were identified to play in the achievement of national and international sporting success (Rees et al., 2016).

Moreover, the conclusions drawn from sociological interpretations contrast initial suggestions from studies of high performance coach education that occurred in partnership with tertiary providers, such as Higher Education institutions (HEIs) (Araya et al., 2015; Galvan et al., 2012). In this context, authors reported of formal provision

that coaches valued for recurrent opportunities provided to converse with peer learners and educators while completing coach education. This was seen to support practitioners in elevating their critical and reflective conduct (Araya et al., 2015; Galvan et al., 2012).

Notwithstanding these limited and somewhat scattered conclusions, it would appear that authors have moved beyond proposing “solutions” (e.g. model-based instructions or scenario-based learning) to enhance the “effectiveness” of coach education (e.g. Cassidy et al., 2006; Nash and Sproule, 2012; Vella et al., 2013). Researcher suggestions to date of the views that coaching practitioners define are significant to understanding the diverse situations, processes, and experiences within high performance coach education and learning. In some respect, however, these insights have presented a partial picture. It would be important to consider other key stakeholders (e.g. educators, managers of coach education) to explore the thoughts, experiences, and perceptions that shape the conduct of these “significant others”, who contribute to the development and delivery of high performance coach education.

From a methodological perspective, to date, conclusions of high performance coach education and learning have derived largely from studies that conducted one- or two-time interview engagement with coaching practitioners (e.g. Chesterfield et al., 2010; Christensen, 2013; Consterdine et al., 2013; He et al., 2018; Hussain et al., 2012; Irwin et al., 2004; Reade et al., 2008a; 2008b; Townsend and Cushion, 2017). Indeed, only Phelan and Griffiths (2018) suggested their conduct of a ten-month long ethnographic study of workplace learning with coaches and administrative staff in an Olympic High-Performance Centre in the UK. Further longitudinal research was conducted by Jones

and Allison (2014), who engaged coaches, who were completing a high performance coach education course, in several focus group interviews over a period of 18 months. To enrich these existing insights into circumstances that shape the perspectives of stakeholders, including coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers, I suggest that it would be valuable to set research “in the field” of high performance coach education over prolonged periods. I propose it is important to build on existing conclusions, sociological interpretations, and insights gained from limited longitudinal studies, to lay the foundations for in-depth studies *with* key stakeholders *in* the imminent environments of high performance coach education and learning.

My study in the context of the UKCC Coach Level 4 award

My research is set in the context of the United Kingdom Coaching Certificate Coach Level 4 (UKCC CL4) award, the highest qualification in the United Kingdom Coaching Certificate (UKCC) scheme (scUK, 2015). The UKCC scheme was developed following recommendations of the Coaching Task Force (CTF) Final Report in 2002, which outlined a review and recommendations for the progress of sports coaching in the UK (DCMS, 2002). With the aim to advance the quality of coaching, it was envisaged that centrally organised coach education could increase the transparency and comparability of qualifications (DCMS, 2002). This led to the development of a standardised coach education framework, known as the UKCC scheme, which comprises of four levels, including the Coaching Assistant at Level 1, the Session Coach at Level 2, the Club Coach at Level 3, and the Performance Coach at Level 4 (scUK, 2015).

For the establishment and implementation of the UKCC CL4 award, Governing Bodies (GBs) and HEIs have come together to develop postgraduate coach education programmes with the support and guidance of Sports Coach UK⁵ (scUK), the agency for coaching in the UK. To establish the award in a particular sport, a GB first expresses their interest to scUK, following which they review postgraduate provision of HEIs that are certified by scUK to offer academic provision on the UKCC CL4 award. The initial dialogues between GBs and HEIs result in collaborations for the purpose of award establishment, implementation, and delivery (Lyle, 2010). In a review process, one GB and one HEI jointly propose “their” UKCC CL4 award, which is approved by scUK, if the

⁵ In 2017, *Sports Coach UK* changed their name to *UK Coaching*. For most part of my research, I have associated the organisation and those involved with it with its former name. This is why I use *Sports Coach UK* (scUK) to refer to the agency for coaching in the UK throughout this thesis.

provision adheres to Higher Education (HE) regulations and Level 4 competences.

Within the boundaries of these expectations, GBs and HEIs have flexibility in the award design and recruitment process of coaches. In principle, coaches, who apply for a place on the UKCC CL4 award, must hold a UKCC Level 3 certificate (or equivalent) in addition to evidence of long-term coaching experience. GBs and HEIs, however, consider applications on a case-to-case basis and register those onto the course, who wish to enrol without Level 3 certificate, granted they can provide sufficient evidence of prior learning.

In close collaboration with scUK, GBs and HEIs need to ensure that the UKCC CL4 award meets sport-specific objectives and the benchmark at postgraduate HE level 7 (Lyle, 2010). Accordingly, coach learners complete postgraduate content and assessments, which culminates in the receiving of a Postgraduate Diploma (PG Dip) and a UKCC CL4 certificate at the end of their CL4 studies (scUK, 2015). Over a period of 18- 24 months, practitioners complete course modules that focus on individual, social and cultural nuances of coaching practice (e.g. coaching process, coaching philosophy) and on scientific underpinnings of sport performance (e.g. biomechanics, physiology). Over the course of their studies, coaches typically attend six residential events, each usually lasting two days, during which HEi lecturers and GB educators lead the taught delivery. Between these periods, practitioners are responsible to engage with course content as distance learners.

With PG Dip completion, coaches gain 120 postgraduate credits, which distinguishes the UKCC CL4 award from the lower levels of coach education, where no alignments with HE exist. Coaches can use these credits to progress their academic learning at postgraduate level 7. For this purpose, coach learners need to complete a further 60

postgraduate credits on a Masters degree in order to obtain this qualification, which comprises altogether of 180 postgraduate credits. This, however, is optional for practitioners, who complete the award, and usually occurs without involvement of the UKCC CL4 awarding GB.

For the purpose of my research, I developed a relationship with scUK, which began when Susan, the coach education manager responsible for the UKCC CL4 award across GBs and HEIs, expressed her interest to study the UKCC CL4 award to Bill, my Director of Studies (DoS). At this time, scUK had started to pilot the award with selected GBs and HEIs, however, due to the novelty of its layout, the parties involved knew little about the practicalities of this approach to coach education, its advantages, limitations, and the impact it may have on those, who develop, deliver, and complete it. Susan, who became a key contact throughout my study, hoped to gain insights that would enrich evaluations of the effectiveness of coach education courses. These were hoped to aid the quality assurance and promotion of the UKCC CL4 award. Upon agreement with Susan that a qualitative research approach would be most appropriate to meeting the objectives we had outlined, Bill and I determined the methodological and theoretical underpinnings that we regarded most appropriate for my doctoral-level study.

Research aim and research questions

The aim of my research was to study the experiences of coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers in the context of the UKCC CL4 award. In particular, my attention has been on the meanings and perceptions that coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers interpret from engaging with situations encountered on the UKCC CL4 award. Towards this end, I employed an ethnographically inspired methodology (see thesis chapter 4) to explore the following research questions:

- RQ1** What is the nature of the UKCC CL4 award? How do coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers act and interact in these environments? Why do they act and interact in certain ways?
- RQ2** How do coaches, coach educators and coach education managers value the UKCC CL4 award? Why do they value the UKCC CL4 award in certain ways?
- RQ3** How do coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers perceive the impact of high performance coach education on practitioners, who complete the UKCC CL4 award? What factors shape the perceived impact of the UKCC CL4 award?
- RQ4** What are the experiences of coaches, coach educators and coach education managers with the UKCC CL4 award? How do their interactions shape these experiences?

The significance of my study

From my engagement with studies conducted in relation to the education and learning of high performance coaches (see thesis chapter 3), I recognise that practitioners draw on a variety of sources and situations for the purpose of their continuous learning (e.g. Jones et al., 2003; 2004; Mallett et al., 2016; Nash and Sproule, 2009; Reade et al., 2009a; 2009b; Werthner and Trudel, 2009).

Authors reported that coaches tend to criticise formal coach education due to perceptions of limited value, relevance, and transferability into practice (e.g. Chesterfield et al., 2010; Jones and Allison, 2014; Mesquita et al., 2014; Townsend and Cushion, 2017). Coaches seem to perceive more useful to their development the informal and social situations that occur in close conjunction with issues encountered in day-to-day coaching (e.g. Erickson et al., 2007; He et al., 2018; Jones et al., 2003; Nash and Sproule, 2009; Werthner and Trudel, 2009). To date, authors have offered insight into the views of coaching practitioners, while limited research has attended to studying the perspectives of other key stakeholders (e.g. educators, directors of coaching), involved in processes of high performance coach education and learning (e.g. Phelan and Griffiths, 2018; Rynne and Mallett, 2012; Rynne et al., 2010; Townsend and Cushion, 2017).

While I will outline recommendations in the latter half of this thesis to emphasise more explicitly the significance of my study, I wish to offer here some contemplations. I believe that this PhD thesis could be considered a contribution to research understandings, since it offers insight into the individual and social experiences of coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers in environments of coach

education and learning on the UKCC CL4 award. To this end, I have conducted longitudinal research to explore how stakeholders act and interact in the situations encountered on the UKCC CL4 award (Piggott, 2015).

I envisage that my particular attention to the value and impact that stakeholders associate with coaches' completion of the UKCC CL4 award will add depth to understandings that, so far, stem largely from studies of practitioner perceptions. Indeed, my prolonged engagement with stakeholders "in the field" of the UKCC CL4 award will allow me to portray the influences that shape the perspectives of coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers in certain ways. To this end, I have drawn on symbolic interactionist work to deliver sociological interpretations of my research experiences, which contribute to a research agenda that seeks to make sense of the complexities encountered in settings of high performance coach education and learning (Stodter and Cushion; Townsend et al., 2015). I hope that the methodological and theoretical underpinning of my longitudinal research *with* stakeholders *in* the environments of the UKCC CL4 award will render also an applied benefit to those, who contribute to the continuous development and delivery of coach education in the UK.

Chapter 3. Literature review

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to outline studies in connection to high performance coach education and learning. Overleaf in Table 1, I have grouped the literature discussed in the upcoming pages according to the themes used to structure this chapter. To arrive at this organisation, in my reading and re-reading of studies, I paid attention to research aims as well as to methodological considerations and key conclusions. It will come as no surprise to the reader that this has been an iterative process. With the particular structure used to discuss the reviewed literature in this thesis, I hope to emphasise the need for longitudinal and sociological studies, such as the research I have conducted.

With this in mind, initially, I will present studies that portray the learning of high performance coaches as an ongoing, longitudinal, and self-directed endeavour. Here, I will discuss research that focused on coaching expertise and the variety of sources that practitioners draw upon in order to learn. Then, I will draw attention to a body of research that focused on the learning of high performances coaches in the workplace. From there, I will move to a discussion of formal coach education, which has been identified as an integral part of practitioner learning, however, often criticised for its limited relevance and transferability to coaching practice. Within this section, I will discuss sociological interpretations of high performance coach education and learning as well as research that studied the provision offered to high performance coaches in collaboration with tertiary providers.

While I shy away from claiming that I will deliver a “complete” review, I will reflect on understandings gained from the academic literature in order to expose a paucity of sociologically informed, longitudinal studies set in the context of high performance coach education and learning. In particular, I hope to strengthen my emphasis on the need to respond to the research questions I set out to answer with my PhD research (Wolcott, 2002; 2009).

Table 1. An overview of the research discussed in the literature review.

Authors	Title and year	Country	Type of research	Definitions	Participants	Research design and research method	Sub-chapter
Nash, C., Collins, D.	Tacit knowledge in expert coaching: Science or art? (2006)	UK	Positional paper. Focus on knowledge.	Expert coach: Expert status associated with knowledge use in practice; experts draw on well-developed repertoire.	No participants.	Review of previous research, followed by suggestions on tacit knowledge in coaching.	Longitudinal process (Expertise)
Erickson, K., Côté, J., Fraser-Thomas, J.	Sport Experiences, Milestones and Educational Activities Associated With High-Performance Coaches' Development. (2007)	Canada	Empirical study. Focus on high performance coaching.	High performance coach: Someone coaching highly skilled athletes in a performance environment, i.e. higher level than secondary school or youth development.	19 current or former high-performance head coaches	Quantitative, retrospective interviews (circa 2 hours per participant) collecting quantitative sport-experience data.	Longitudinal process (Expertise)
Nash, C. S., Sproule, J.	Career Development of Expert Coaches. (2009)	UK	Empirical study. Focus on coaching careers.	Expert coach: '...what constitutes an expert coach is still unclear...' (Nash and Sproule, 2009:121).	9 purposefully sampled coaches; highest GB coaching award; 10 years coaching at least at national level; regular development of national performers.	Qualitative study. Semi-structured interviews with duration of 120-130 minutes each.	Longitudinal process (Expertise)
Jones, R., Armour, K., Potrac, P.	Sports Coaching Cultures (2004)	UK	Empirical study. Life story approach.	No definition offered of expert coaching.	8 coaches from different sports and backgrounds	Qualitative study. In-depth interviews.	Longitudinal process (Expertise)
Jones, R., Armour, K., Potrac, P.	Constructing expert knowledge: A case study of a top-level professional soccer coach. (2003)	UK	Empirical study. Focus on knowledge.	No definition offered of expert coaching.	1 professional soccer coach	Qualitative study. 5 informal interviews with total duration of 8 hours.	Longitudinal process (Expertise)
Wiman, M., Salmoni, A. W., Hall, C. R.	An Examination of the Definition and Development of Expert Coaching. (2010)	Canada	Empirical study. Focus on coaching expertise.	Expert coach: No reference to a certain definition - different research findings explained.	8 university level or higher coaches (all head coaches) and 7 university-level or higher athletes.	Qualitative study. In-depth semi-structured interviews.	Longitudinal process (Expertise)
Christensen, M. K.	Outlining a typology of sports coaching careers: paradigmatic trajectories and ideal career types among high-performance sports coaches. (2013)	Denmark	Empirical study. Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital. Wenger's concept of paradigmatic pathways.	High performance coach: Definition adopted from Erickson et al. in their 2007 paper.	10 high-performance coaches of athletes performing at the highest level of sport	In-depth interviews (life course map first, then semi-structured) with 106 minutes average duration.	Longitudinal process (Expertise)

Werthner, P., Trudel, P.	Investigating the Idiosyncratic Learning Paths of Elite Canadian Coaches. (2009)	Canada	Empirical study. Focus on coach education.	No definition offered of elite coaching.	15 Olympic coaches, who coach one athlete, achieved top ten-world result in two years before study.	Qualitative study. In-depth interviews; each interview lasted 2-3 hours.	Longitudinal process (Diverse sources)
He, C., Trudel, P., Culver D.	Actual and ideal sources of coaching knowledge of elite Chinese coaches (2018)	China	Empirical study. Focus on coach learning.	No definition offered of elite coaching.	80 purposefully selected coaches: Min. one year gymnastics or rhythmic gymnastics coach at national, provincial, or university/city level.	Data from 80 online questionnaires. 16 coaches also took part in semi-structured interviews.	Longitudinal process (Diverse sources)
Irwin, G., Hanton, S., Kerwin, D.	Reflective practice and the origins of elite coaching knowledge. (2004)	UK	Empirical study. Focus on elite coaching.	Elite coach: International coach; 10-year experience; international athletes; high performance coach in British Gymnastics Association.	16 elite gymnastics coaches.	Semi-structured interviews with an average 1.5-hour duration; 3 pilot interviews; data analysis: 16 single cases, one per coach.	Longitudinal process (Diverse sources)
Reade, I., Rodgers, W., Hall, N.	Knowledge Transfer: How do High Performance Coaches Access the Knowledge of Sport Scientists? (2008a)	Canada	Empirical study. Focus on coaching and sport science.	No definition offered of high performance coaching.	205 Canadian Inter university Sport (CIS) coaches	Online questionnaire created for this study; out of 380 coaches, 205 completed it at least partially	Longitudinal process (Diverse sources)
Reade, I., Rodgers, W., Spriggs, K.	New Ideas for High Performances Coaches: A Case Study of Knowledge Transfer in Sport Science. (2008b)	Canada	Empirical study. Focus on coaching and sport science.	High performance coach: national/ junior team athletes, employed by national and provincial sport organizations, sport clubs, colleges and universities.	20 full-time coaches within competitive university sport	Online questionnaire that created for this study; structured interviews as follow-up with 20 minutes duration each.	Longitudinal process (Diverse sources)

Rynne, S.B., Mallett, C., Tinning, R.	High performance sport coaching: Institutes of sport as sites for learning (2006)	Australia	Positional paper. Focus on learning in the workplace	High performance coach: employed in Australian Institute of Sport.	No participants.	Literature review on the nature of coach development; examination of interactions between workplace and the individual.	Workplace learning
Rynne, S. B., Mallett, C.J., Tinning, R.	Workplace learning of high performance sports coaches. (2010)	Australia	Empirical study. Focus on coach learning.	No definition offered of high performance coaching.	6 State Institute of Sport (SIS) coaches and 6 SIS administrators	Qualitative study. Semi-structured interviews. Average duration: 82 minutes.	Workplace learning
Rynne, S. B., Mallett, C. J.	Understanding the work and learning of high performance coaches. (2012)	Australia	Empirical study. Focus on coach learning.	High performance coaching: complex, chaotic; pressure, responsibility for results.	6 State Institute of Sport (SIS) coaches and 6 SIS administrators	Qualitative study. Semi-structured interviews. Average duration: 82 minutes.	Workplace learning
Occhino, J., Mallett, C., Rynne, S.	Dynamic social networks in high performance football coaching. (2013)	Australia	Empirical study. Focus on coach learning.	No definition offered of high performance coaching.	6 football Head Coaches in an Australian Institute or Academy of Sport	Qualitative study. Semi-structured interviews. Average duration: 60 minutes.	Workplace learning
Mallett, C. J., Rynne, S.B., Billett, S.	Valued learning experiences of early career and experiences high-performance coaches. (2016)	Australia	Empirical study. Focus on coach learning.	No definition offered of high performance coaching.	19 high performance coaches who attended a mentoring programme.	In-depth, face-to-face survey with 50-95 minutes duration.	Workplace learning
Rynne, S. B., Mallett, C. J.	Coaches' learning and sustainability in high performance sport. (2014)	Australia	Empirical study. Focus on coach learning.	High performance coaching: complex and chaotic; pressure, responsibility for athlete results	44 Olympic and performance coaches; full-time employed in institutional environment at time of study.	Qualitative study. Semi-structured interviews over a period of five years collected. Average of 82 minutes.	Workplace learning
Rynne, S.	Fast track' and 'traditional path' coaches: affordances, agency and social capital. (2014)	Australia	Empirical study. Informed by interpretivist research approach.	No definition offered of high performance coaching.	2 purposefully sampled coaches: 1 fast track, 1 traditional pathway	Qualitative study. Three-day observation at level three course that coaches attended. One in-depth interview per coach (68 minutes average duration).	Longitudinal process (Diverse sources)
Phelan, S., Griffiths, M.	Reconceptualising professional learning through knowing-in-practice: a case study of a coaches high performance centre.(2018)	UK	Empirical study. Focus on coach learning.	High performance coaches in the study were described as "professional coaches".	Purposeful sampling of 6 coaches and 3 administrative staff, in Olympic High Performance Centre.	10-month ethnographic study. Observations and interviews (one in first and one in last month of study).	Workplace learning

Callary, B., Culver, D., Werthner, P., Bales, J.	An Overview of Seven National High Performance Coach Education Programs (2014)	Inter- national	Empirical study. Focus on coach education.	No definition offered of high performance coaching.	7 coach education managers, who overlook the seven studied coach education programmes	Questionnaires and follow-up interviews to clarify questionnaire responses.	High perf. coach education: international
Mesquita, I., Ribeiro, J., Santos, S., Morgan, K.	Coach Learning and Coach Education: Portuguese Expert Coaches' Perspectives (2014)	Portugal	Empirical study. Learning to experiential learning: Sfard's conception of learning.	Expert coach: Renowned expert; critical thinking; coach ed. tutor; training of development and elite athletes (Abraham et al., 2006)	6 top-level coaches (5 men, 1 woman). Participants were chosen by their peers, who were three technical directors from GBs and three coaches.	Qualitative study. Semi-structured interviews with 60-90 minute duration.	High perf. coach education: international
Hussain, A., Trudel, P., Patrick, T., Rossi, A.	Reflections on a novel coach education program: A narrative analysis. (2012)	Canada	Empirical study. Interpretive approach. Narrative analysis.	No definition offered of high performance coaching.	Purposeful sampling of one Triathlon coach, former high performance director of triathlon GB.	Qualitative study. Interviews (audio recorded); casual meetings (documented with field notes and memos).	High perf. coach education: international
Jones, R., Allison, W.	Candidates' experiences of elite coach education: A longitudinal study ('Tracking the journey') (2014)	UK	Empirical study. Focus on coach education.	Coaches, who participated in an elite coach education programme.	20 participants	Qualitative, longitudinal study. 19 video diaries that coaches during 18- month long coach education programme. 18 focus groups, conducted as four sets throughout the course.	High perf. coach education: international

Consterdine, A., Newton, J., Piggin, S.	'Time to take the stage': a contextual study of a high performance coach. (2013)	UK	Empirical study. Interpretive phenomenological analysis, Goffman	No definition offered of high performance coaching.	1 UK National Athletics coach	4 semi-structured interviews (6 hours data). Observation during pre-season (no hours/sessions stated)	Sociological interpret.
Chesterfield, G., Potrac, P., Jones, R.	'Studentship' and 'impression management' in an advanced soccer coach ed. award (2010)	UK	Empirical study. Interpretivism. Grounded theory and Goffman.	No definition offered of high performance coaching.	6 coaches, who had completed the UEFA A licence in the last 5 years.	In-depth semi-structured interview, each up to 90 minutes duration.	Sociological interpret.
Townsend, R., Cushion C.	Elite cricket coach education: a Bourdieusian analysis. (2017)	UK	Empirical study. Interpretation through lens of Bourdieu's work.	Elite coaching: Current cricket UKCC level 4 trainees and coaches.	10 coaches, who were cricket UKCC level 4 trainees or coaches. Cricket level 4 programme director.	Semi-structured interviews with an average duration of 53 minutes.	Sociological interpret.

Galvan, H., Fyall, G., Culpan, I.	High-perf. cricket coaches' perceptions of an educationally informed coach ed. programme (2012)	New Zealand	Empirical study. Focus on coach education.	Coaches, who completed NZC Level 3 award.	Six cricket coaches, who completed NZC Level 3 award between 2007 and 2009.	Interviews, review of module content and coaches' feedback, given over the course of NZC Level 3 completion.	Tertiary providers in high perf. coach education
Mallett, C., Dickens, S.	Authenticity in formal coach ed.: Online postgrad. studies in sports coaching at the University of Queensland (2009)	Australia	Review and positioning of provision postgrad. online provision.	Scholarship coaches of National Coaching Scholarship Program, other aspiring and current high performance coaches.	No participants	Review of philosophy, structure, modules, assessments and outcomes of postgrad online coach ed.	Tertiary providers in high perf. coach education
Araya, J., Bennie, A., O'Connor, D.	Understanding Performance Coach Development: Perceptions about a Postgrad. Formal Coach Ed. Program (2015)	Australia	Empirical study. Focus on coach education.	Reference to Lyle (2002): coaches in intensive sport context with commitment to performance, competition goals.	17 male team sports coaches of adolescent or senior athletes (recruitment open to individual and female coaches too). MA degree graduates.	Interviews were 28-65 minutes in length. Each coach participated in one interview. Data saturation was reached after 17 participants.	Tertiary providers in high perf. coach education

The longitudinal process of becoming a high performance coach

Coaching researchers have increasingly recognised sports coaching practice as a complex, multidimensional, and social endeavour (e.g. Bowes and Jones, 2006; Jones, 2000; Jones et al., 2002; 2003; 2004). Indeed, authors have distanced their suggestions from viewing high performance coaches as mere facilitators of athletic performance and attended to studying the processes that underpin the longitudinal development of coaches' skills. Increasing consideration has been taken in relation to aspects, such as coaches' expertise, typical characteristics of high performance coaches, and practitioner experiences with education and learning (e.g. Erickson et al., 2007; Jones et al., 2003; Nash and Sproule, 2009; Wiman et al., 2010).

To begin this thesis chapter, I will turn to the learning of high performance coaches as a longitudinal and continuous endeavour. Here, I will first discuss studies that focused on the expertise of those practitioners, who operate at the higher end of the performance pyramid and then consider research, in which authors turned more explicitly to the variety of opportunities that high performance coaches draw upon in their pursuit of continuous learning.

The development of coaching expertise

With the increase in research on the education and learning of coaching practitioners, authors have attended to the notion of expertise (e.g. Christensen, 2013; Erickson et al., 2007; Jones et al., 2003; 2004; Nash and Collins, 2006; Nash and Sproule, 2009). Nash and Collins (2006), transferred lessons learned from the expertise research in chess, music, and clinical settings into sports coaching. In their pursuit of expertise, the authors suggested that coaches would engage in different situations, which would include the completion of coach education courses, interactions with peer professionals, and coaching experiences (Nash and Collins, 2006). For the purpose of their study, the authors focused on “tacit” understandings, a type of ‘...knowledge gained primarily from experience performing practical, everyday problems...’ (Nash and Collins, 2006:470). Indeed, the view that practitioners would advance their skills “on the job” is a recurrent theme in studies on the education and learning of high performance coaches (e.g. Erickson et al., 2007; Irwin et al., 2004; Jones et al., 2003; Mallett et al., 2016; Mesquita et al., 2014; Wiman et al., 2010). For instance, Erickson et al. (2007) aimed to identify key experiences that high performance coaches valued as practitioners. For the purpose of their research, the authors regarded a high performance coach

...as someone coaching highly skilled athletes in a sport environment that focused primarily on performance, as opposed to fun or athlete development... (Erickson et al., 2007:304).

Following recruitment of 19 Canadian interuniversity coaches, quantitative interviews were hoped to allow insight into specific experiences, activities and resources that practitioners learned from throughout their careers. Although Erickson et al. (2007)

suggested that participants thought formal coach education was noteworthy to career progression, the authors highlighted a scope for enhancement. It was proposed that this could be accomplished with increased tailoring of educational situations to coaches' needs. In an attempt to categorise typical phases, significant to becoming a high performance coach, the authors identified five milestones: (i) Diverse sport engagement (age six to 12 years); (ii) Competitive sport commitment (age 13 to 18); (iii) High performance sport participation and introduction to coaching (age 19 to 23); (iv) Part-time coaching (age 24 to 28 years); (v) Head Coach at high performance level (age 29 years and older) (Erickson et al., 2007). While this linear view is insightful to understanding coaching careers in greater depth, the seeming implication that we could categorise coaches' development would seem to point towards limited consideration of those practitioners, whose personal histories deviate from the proposed milestones.

Somewhat pursuing a corresponding intention, Christensen (2013) aimed to define typical characteristics of high performance coaches. For her study, the author focused on "typologies",

...points of orientation that may be useful in portraying people or behaviours to the extent that they approximate (but do not duplicate) the constructed *ideal type* (Christensen, 2013:100).

Interviews with ten Danish high performance coaches were envisaged to shed light on '...the realities of coaches by engaging them in conversations about their experiences' (Christensen, 2013:101). Similar to Erickson et al. (2007), the author considered this useful to determine detailed accounts of decisions, experiences, and activities that shaped practitioner progression towards becoming a high performance coach.

In her interpretations, Christensen (2013) referred to Bourdieu's notions of "social and cultural capital" to identify three trajectories: (1) the "elite-athlete" coach, (2) the "academic" coach, and (3) the "early starter" coach. Those considered "elite-athlete" coaches were reported to value their former sporting careers, during which their successful performances and reputable rankings, would support the achievement of credibility and reputation for athletic proficiency. Divergent from the linear suggestions by Erickson et al. (2007), Christensen recognised that "elite-athlete" coaches would sometimes transfer objectified and embodied cultural capital, gained from their athletic excellence, straight into Head Coaching positions. Contrary to this, "early starter" coaches often did not recollect an elite athletic career; rather, their long-term and continuous coaching practice was particularly important to developing expertise. "Academic" coaches would engage also in translations of in-depth understandings from one context to another. These practitioners were reported to interweave theoretical knowledge gained from participation in educational settings into their coaching practice.

Although Christensen (2013) reported that the participants in her study viewed formal coach education as a vital pillar to their development, similar to Erickson et al. (2007), the author wrote that this could be better aligned with coaches' interests. Notably, participants felt that the completion of coach education courses would be most useful four to six years following commencement of high performance coaching roles. It was felt that this would allow coaches to gain experience, develop competence and confidence when working with elite athletes. In turn, this was perceived to facilitate the synthesis of situations encountered in coaching practice with coach education content (Christensen, 2013).

The integration of content taught on coach education courses with the realities of coaching practice was challenging also for those, who took part in a study by Nash and Sproule (2009). The authors stated that consensus appeared to exist in understanding “effective” coaches as ‘...those who adapt their behaviour to meet the demands of their particular coaching environment...’, however, prompted that the features that distinguish expert coaches from this definition, had yet to be established (Nash and Sproule, 2009:121). To enrich existing understandings, their research focused on the experiences with training, continuous development and education of nine practitioners from three different sports in the UK. To be considered “expert” and participate in the study, coaches were expected to meet several criteria that Nash and Sproule (2009) aligned with suggestions by Erickson et al. (2007). Coaches had to: (i) hold the highest coaching award that their GB offered, (ii) have a minimum of ten years coaching experience, (iii) coach at regional or national level, and (iv) evidence their work with athletes, who competed at national level (Nash and Sproule, 2009). To become experts, participants were reported to place emphasis on reflective practice, which they believed was essential due to the often-lacking availability and quality of coach education courses. Similar to Nash and Collins (2006), Nash and Sproule (2009) emphasised that “situated” learning opportunities, such as those found in coaching practice, would enable practitioners to advance social, motivational, and emotional considerations of the coaching process. Here, the authors drew attention to expert coaches as self-directed practitioners when seeking opportunities for professional progression. Yet, I contend that they missed an opportunity to inform theoretically their interpretations that relate to social and cultural nuances that shape coach learning and practice.

Here, I turn to a study by Wiman et al. (2010), in which the authors explored influences that determined coaching expertise. Following semi-structured interviews with seven Canadian elite athletes and eight coaches, the authors highlighted, similar to Christensen (2013), that coaches' sense of expertise was defined not only by merit, but also by reputation. Wiman et al. (2010) proposed that coaches were considered "experts" based on their behaviour in coaching practice, interactions with athletes, and views on sport-related matters (Wiman et al., 2010). Of particular importance, were the opinions of other practitioners, athletes and their parents. These "significant others", as I would refer to them, were suggested to regard those practitioners as experts, who appeared "forward-thinking" in their professional conduct.

Coaches would attain such an image, if they were seen to interpret athletic performance and coaching as longitudinal processes that required continuous adjustments to different settings. Coaches were respected further for their experiences as practitioners and former athletes, for seeking comments and ideas from colleagues, and for demonstrating that they would reflect on the observations others shared with them (Erickson et al., 2007; Nash and Sproule, 2009; Wiman et al., 2010). According to Wiman et al. (2010), it was important for practitioners to engage in these processes over prolonged periods in order to establish and secure their reputation as "expert" coaches.

This emphasis on the continuity of learning, I suggest to recur in suggestions set forth by Jones et al. (2004). In line with a view of coaching expertise as a longitudinal endeavour, Jones et al. (2004:3) conducted an empirical study with eight high performance coaches, who operated at '...the very apex of their sport...' at the time of the research. With a "life story" approach to in-depth interviews, the authors sought

to explore the diverse processes that coaches considered supportive of evolving their proficiency. The story of each practitioner was presented in one chapter in the Jones et al. (2004) text and demonstrated that coaches recollected a variety of valuable experiences in their professional and personal lives. The authors identified the everyday coaching practice as one of the most significant instances of learning. Participants saw a place for coach accreditation, however, they were cautious of the false assumption that those, who were more certified, would be “better” coaches. Jones et al. (2004) went on to report that participants emphasised that the managing of different demands in social coaching situations *in situ* that allowed them to develop as coaches.

The authors offered greater depth in Jones et al. (2003), a journal article, which was presented as a case study of one soccer coach. Here, the authors noted that their participant sought to coach his players in line with individual needs, which is a view he ascribed to his own player experiences with coach-athlete interactions. The authors reported of a balancing act that the coach felt he ought to manage during training sessions, since it was most significant to focus on performance improvement, while acknowledging the diverse interests and expectations of his players (Jones et al., 2003). This led the authors to draw attention to the importance of interpersonal skills in the day-to-day practice of coaches in addition to sport-specific knowledge. Indeed, Jones et al. (2003) proposed that the development of these understandings should run parallel to one another throughout coaches’ careers.

Within these considerations, the authors’ suggestions are notable because they propose that coaching should be considered a multidimensional profession that requires ongoing and careful consideration. In addition, I believe that the work by

Jones et al. (2003; 2004) was of methodological significance to coaching research in the early 2000s with the rich understandings that the authors created when adopting a reflexive perspective in their studies. By using a “life story” approach and disseminating in-depth insights into processes underpinning the knowledge of high performance coaches, I view Jones et al.’s work as a milestone following the publication of the CTF report in 2002 (DCMS, 2002). I suggest that Jones et al. (2003; 2004) offered an exemplar for researchers, who strive to develop our understandings beyond categorical or linear interpretations of coach education and learning. Although their research, similar to studies by Erickson et al. (2007), Nash and Sproule (2009), Wiman et al. (2010), did not focus explicitly on the learning of high performance coaches, I regard the suggestions by Jones et al. (2003; 2004) significant to outline recurrent themes that appear to emerge in studies of coach learning. Notably, practitioners seem to interpret learning as a process that is ongoing throughout their careers, perhaps even their lives, and encompasses the completion of coach education courses, experiences as an athlete and coach, interactions with significant others (e.g. athletes, coaches), and reflections upon these diverse experiences.

The importance of diverse situations of education and learning

In some relation to considerations of coaching expertise outlined in the previous section, authors focused more overtly on identifying the different sources of education and learning that high performance coaches draw upon for the purpose of their ongoing development (e.g. Nash and Sproule, 2009; Reade et al., 2008a; 2008b; Werthner and Trudel, 2009).

In their accounts, researchers tend to distinguish between formal, nonformal, and informal learning, which Nelson et al. (2006) drew upon to present a holistic view of coach learning. The authors regard formal instances of learning as situations in educational settings, where instructors deliver, assess, and support the learning of coaches. For the purpose of my study, I am adopting this understanding when I refer of formal coach education and learning as “traditional” coach education and learning. Nelson et al. (2006) distinguish nonformal education and learning, which occurs outside formal coach education and encompasses structured situations that target professionals with shared interests. This could include seminars, workshops, and conferences, exclusively for high performance coaches, for instance. In addition, coaches would engage in informal learning, which can be incidental at times and occurs in routine situations, such as during coaches’ athletic career, coaching *in situ* and dialogues with peers (Nelson et al., 2006).

Werthner and Trudel (2009) recognised this variety in their work on coaches’ “idiosyncratic” pathways of learning. The authors investigated the values that practitioners associate with the provision available in the Canadian National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP). For the purpose of their study, the authors interviewed 15 Olympic coaches, who: (i) had coached at national and international levels for ten

years, (ii) were Olympic coaches at the time of the study, and (iii) supported athletes, who reached the world's top ten ranking in the two years prior to study participation.

Following interviews, Werthner and Trudel (2009) noted that practitioners viewed formal instances of learning integral to becoming an Olympic coach. Participants found their completion of university degrees most significant, which was also recalled by those, who had completed academic studies in subjects, other than coaching. I suggest that this could be associated with the development of skills, such as critical appraisal and synthesis of information, that students are envisaged to obtain from completion of HE degrees (Moore, 2013). Interestingly, several coaches valued NCCP courses given their perceived transferability into practice. As an example, Werthner and Trudel (2009) suggested that international coaches felt that the employment in a National Coaching Institute (NCI) and completion of formal coach education in Canada had been essential to enhancing understandings of the national culture in high performance sport. Daily dialogues with colleagues at the NCI were also important to those practitioners, who lacked an elite athletic background. While this stood in contrast to other participants, who competed in Olympic Games, there appeared to be agreement among practitioners on the value of coaching practice as a crucial opportunity to learn *from* and *about* the nuances of coaching.

Werthner and Trudel (2009) reported that Canadian as well as international coaches in their study used recurrent evaluation of performances of their own and international athletes, as well as dialogues and coach education content to adapt training routines. Overall, the authors emphasised that Olympic coaches appear to draw on similar resources, however, value these situations in different ways. This, the authors believed to be interweaved with individual circumstances of practitioners and their athletes.

With this, I suggest that Werthner and Trudel (2009) assume a view of high performance coach learning as a lifelong endeavour that is difficult to quantify due to its distinctiveness to individual circumstances and preferences.

I identified similar perspectives when reading a study by He et al. (2018), who sought to explore the sources of learning among Chinese high performance coaches.

Following purposive sampling, a common approach to participant recruitment in qualitative coaching studies (e.g. Christensen, 2013; Erickson et al., 2007; Nash and Sproule, 2009; Werthner and Trudel, 2009), 80 gymnastics coaches completed questionnaires about their actual and preferred sources of learning. Sixteen of these practitioners engaged in follow-up interviews, envisaged to add depth to initial insights that He et al. (2018) gained from questionnaire responses. In an iteration of suggestions from studies discussed in this chapter, the authors noted that high performance coaches would learn from different sources, including athletic and coaching experiences, interactions with “mentor coaches”, coach education, as well as material resources, such as the use of internet, books or articles (e.g. Nash and Collins, 2006; Rynne et al., 2010; Werthner and Trudel, 2009). Participants struggled with coach education courses, because these were offered only on rare occasions. Moreover, their content was perceived too broad to be interweaved with the complex techniques of their sport gymnastics. For these reasons, coaches used their athletic experiences and situations in coaching practice to develop their practitioner skills. Yet, this was not what practitioners desired; Rather, He et al. (2018) reported that participants enjoyed the idea of regular attendance of quality coach education that was relatable to coaching.

One could argue that this was why practitioners appeared to place significant value on workshops and seminars, which they saw as opportunities to discuss their coaching with other practitioners. The atmospheres in these “nonformal” situations were reported to contrast coach education courses that focused on sport-scientific knowledge. In such formal educational settings, however, practitioners hoped to voice their thoughts in dialogues with peer learners too, since they believed that this would support them in creating connections between course content and their experiences as gymnastics coaches (He et al., 2018).

Similar recognition of the individual pathways of coach learning could be defined in a study by Irwin et al. (2004), in which the authors focused on professional and craft sources underpinning elite coaching knowledge. The authors understood formal coach education courses as professional sources, while ‘...knowing in action – an intuitive feel for ...coaching and performance, which develops with experience...’ constituted their conceptions of craft knowledge (Irwin et al., 2004:427). The authors interviewed 16 coaches, who trained international athletes, had supported one athlete in becoming an international performer, had ten years of coaching experience, and were classified “high performance coaches” by the British Gymnastics Association (Irwin et al., 2004). Interviews focused on recollections of those experiences and sources that coaches perceived integral to becoming elite coaches. To develop as a coach, participants were reported to use insights gained from coaching practice, interactions with mentors and international coaches (particularly those from countries they perceived to be more successful in gymnastics), and reflection upon these experiences (Irwin et al., 2004). Similar to Werthner and Trudel (2009) and He et al. (2018), Irwin et al. (2004) reported that participants considered coach education courses integral to their learning,

however, criticised the poor organisation and inconsistent levels of quality among providers. This was why particular importance was awarded to discussions of situations experienced in coaching practice that coaches led with colleagues in so-called “squad sessions”. Resembling the dialogues that coaches in He et al.’s (2018) study recollected during workshops, the squad sessions encompassed arranged discussions about coaching, experimentation with strategies, and shared evaluations of practice (Irwin et al., 2004).

Further emphasis on peer interaction was placed in the work by Reade et al. (2008a, 2008b), who set their research in Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) environments, which employ coaches as well as sport scientists. For the purpose of their studies, 205 coaches participated in an online questionnaire, 17 of which took part in structured follow-up interviews (Reade et al., 2008a; 2008b). While Reade et al. (2008a) suggested that the high performance coaches involved in their study voiced a receptiveness when engaging with academic papers coaches struggled to establish commonalities between practitioner beliefs and the content of research publications. Similar to participants in studies by Irwin et al. (2004) and Werthner and Trudel (2009), the authors argued that CIS coaches considered interactions with colleagues most useful to their learning, particularly with those, who were able to relate to their practitioner ideas. Such dialogues were believed to be challenging to hold with sport scientists, whose conduct of long-lasting studies in response to scientific questions was seen somewhat in contrast to the prompt solutions that coaches sought after to enhance athletic routines (Reade et al., 2008b). Reade et al. (2008a) wrote that practitioners would be more likely to use the evidence found in sport scientific outputs, if this research addressed questions that coaches perceived relevant to

challenges they faced in practice (Reade et al., 2008a). In fact, following interviews, Reade et al. (2008b) commented that it would be most useful to coaches, if their practitioner queries informed sport scientific studies. Alternatively, coaches articulated an interest in communicating with sport scientists in “mediated” learning situations, such as workshops or seminars. Here, Reade et al. (2008a; 2008b) drew on interpretations by Werthner and Trudel (2006), who proposed that learning would occur in mediated, unmediated, and internal settings. Similar to the notion of formal learning (Nelson et al., 2006), the authors perceived situations as mediated, if they were ‘...directed by another person’ (Werthner and Trudel, 2006:201). The barriers to engaging with sport scientists in mediated circumstances, however, would lie in the challenges that coaches associated with working in high performance sport. Among these, Reade et al. (2008a; 2008b) commented on the limited support that participants felt they received from sporting federations to interact with peer professionals and the extensive commitments that coaches felt they ought to prioritise over seeking contact with sport scientists.

Such research suggestions have drawn my attention to the importance of coaches’ learning in their imminent professional environments. In particular, I suggest that the challenges in day-to-day coaching situations, such as those identified by Reade et al. (2008a; 2008b), lead high performance coaches to use those learning opportunities that are not only readily available, but also relatable to practitioner views of the realities of sports coaching.

Workplace learning of high performance coaches

I now turn to studies, which focused on the learning of high performance coaches in workplace settings (e.g. Mallett et al., 2016; Occhino et al., 2013; Phelan and Griffiths, 2018; Rynne and Mallett, 2012; 2014; Rynne et al., 2006; 2010). Predominantly, this research is set in Australian Institutes of Sport, governmentally funded institutions that employ specialists (e.g. coaches, sport scientists, psychologists, etc.), who work towards pursuing international success of Australian athletes.

Of the publications discussed in depth for the purpose of my thesis (see Table 1), I suggest that Rynne et al.'s (2006) article sets the scene with a positioning of workplace learning in Australian Institutes and Academies of Sport (AIAs). The authors recognised that little in-depth research had attended to high performance coach learning in these settings. This was surprising to the authors, who argued that the atmospheres in AIAs created '...data rich environments that enable and require...' recurrent adjustments to opportunities and challenges (Rynne et al., 2006:229). The authors prompted that high performance coaches were expected to cope with diverse processes, such as frequent changes in funding, roles and responsibilities, as well as pressure to facilitate athletic success.

Equally important to Rynne et al. (2006), however, was a view of AIAs as workplaces that employed professionals with expert skills, where experiential learning could occur from day-to-day engagement in jobs at hand. Based on this conception of AIAs as social, yet at times, precarious and unstable professional surroundings, the authors identified a need for in-depth studies within these settings (Rynne et al., 2006).

A series of publications followed, based on a body of empirical research on the resources and opportunities that high performance coaches drew upon to learn and progress in their workplace (e.g. Mallett et al., 2016; Occhino et al., 2013; Rynne and Mallett, 2012; 2014; Rynne et al., 2010).

For instance, Rynne et al. (2010) studied high performance coaches' perceptions of learning in one Australian State Institute of Sport (SIS). Following interviews with six SIS coaches and six administrators, Rynne et al. (2010) shared findings comparable to suggestions set forth by Reade et al. (2008a; 2008b) when proposing that coaches placed importance on dialogues with peer professionals, which they sought primarily with those, who could relate to coaching. Further to this, Mallett et al. (2016) restated following their study with established and those identified as potential future high performance coaches that practitioners perceived their experiences as former athletes equally significant to developing practitioner understandings (Christensen, 2013; He et al., 2018; Werthner and Trudel, 2009).

Rynne et al. (2010) suggested furthermore that coaches demonstrated exceptional dedication to their professional commitments. The authors defined connections between these perspectives and coaches' feelings of professional identity. They proposed that it appeared to be of high, if not highest, priority for practitioners to identify themselves as high performance coaches, while, at times, personal aspects seemed inferior to this self-understanding. Their feelings of responsibility led coaches also to act independently when engaging with coaching-related materials. Largely, these represented "affordances" provided by the SIS and included access to articles, computers, the web, and other specialist technology. Coaches appeared to mirror a sense of autonomy, when managing unpredictable situations in coaching practice,

which, as Rynne et al. (2010) reported, were most useful to learning, because they challenged coaches to advance their approaches to resolving different scenarios. When commenting on their embeddedness in institutional contexts of SIS, coaches seemed to feel that these professional settings facilitated access to different sources and opportunities of learning. Yet, practitioners perceived it challenging to cope with “the politics” of high performance sport and its contested nature (Rynne et al., 2010; Rynne and Mallett, 2012). Because of this, coaches tended to reach out solely to those in the workplace, to whom they had established sufficient trust to discuss ideas and seek advice (Rynne et al., 2010). Rynne and Mallett (2012) also emphasised that SIS coaches felt hesitant when engaging with SIS managers, due to an awareness that their management duties encompassed visits in coaching sessions and assessments of practitioner skills. Coaches were said to fear consequences that might impact their careers unfavourably, if they were to unveil their insecurities to these seemingly superior others (Rynne and Mallett, 2012).

This perspective is somewhat comparable to suggestions offered by Occhino et al. (2013), who conducted a study with full-time employed Australian football coaches. The authors reported that it was problematic for high performance coaches to establish trusted relations in their “dynamic” workplaces, which Occhino et al. (2013) portrayed as result-driven, competitive, and often prioritising short-term outcomes. Similar to conclusions set forth by Rynne et al. (2010), the authors suggested that it was most challenging to establish contact with so-called “paraprofessionals”, such as sport scientists, nutritionists, etc. because of the limited time available to create these connections and seemingly fixed, predetermined regulations articulated by national federations (e.g. funding allocated for partnerships with experts outside SIS). The

authors highlighted that such circumstances would limit high performance coaches' participation in interpersonal situations that would otherwise aid their learning. This could contribute to feelings of professional insecurity (Rynne et al., 2010).

Attaining a sense of security in the workplace was perceived to be most challenging for those coaches, who had not competed as elite athletes, since they had not had opportunities to establish rapport with paraprofessionals, who could be important contacts to high performance coaches. These suggestions were set forth by Rynne (2014) following the author's in-depth study of perceived professional opportunities and barriers of two coaches, who took different paths in their careers. The researcher introduced one coach, who had followed the coach certification pathway to reach its highest level, and another, who was "fast tracked" to this end due to his elite athletic career. Participants seemed to agree that employers often assumed without question a certain skilfulness when interviewing former elite athletes for coaching positions. Both recognised that this advantaged the latter candidates in employment situations. Rynne (2014) argued that the two practitioners shared common understandings when explaining that the career of a former elite athlete would facilitate their access to well-regarded professional surroundings. This seemed to generate a deeper impact on the aspirations of coaches, who did not have a background as elite athletes. Despite his ambition to coach at the highest level in his sport, one practitioner in Rynne's (2014) study was reluctant to consider this an attainable goal due to an engrained belief that his lacking elite athletic experience would hinder his professional prospects.

Career aspirations and the often-complex realities of the day-to-day work of high performance coaches were of interest to Rynne and Mallett (2014), too, who sought to explore coach learning and sustainability of practice in coaches' workplaces. For the

purpose of their work, the authors drew on data gathered over a five-year period from studies with employed Australian full-time high performance coaches. Some conclusions from their research resemble those discussed in this chapter so far, such as comments on the diverse learning sources that coaches used, including reflective practice, athletic experience, dialogues with colleagues (e.g. Nash and Collins, 2006; Reade et al., 2008a; 2008b; Werthner and Trudel, 2009; Wiman et al., 2010) and the challenges practitioners would face in the workplace (e.g. Occhino et al., 2013; Rynne and Mallett, 2014; Rynne et al., 2010).

Of interest, however, were suggestions that Rynne and Mallett (2014) noted in regard of tertiary education, which deviated from reports of formal coach education programmes that held limited relevance in coaching practice (e.g. He et al., 2018; Nash and Sproule, 2009). Rynne and Mallett (2014) suggested that the high performance coaches, whose data they drew upon for the purpose of their study, valued tertiary education programmes (e.g. university degrees) because of the perceived challenges that their content posed to practitioner thinking. Indeed, the authors suggested that coaches, who engaged with tertiary education, felt as though it would enable them to broaden, as well as deepen the ways, in which they approached responsibilities. The authors commented that coaches felt increases in confidence, which extended into perspectives taken in social encounters with family, friends, and professional contacts in and outside the high performance arena.

It would appear that high performance coaches regarded the knowledge gained from mediated situations in tertiary education more sustainable than understandings developed in unmediated instances of learning. For instance, coaches related their feelings of competence and confidence when interacting with paraprofessionals to a

sense of assurance, which they associated with skills they had gained from tertiary study. Contrary to this, coaches in Rynne and Mallett's (2014) study identified a variability in learning from unmediated situations, which was regarded less supportive of developing sustainable practice. In some respect, however, practitioners felt that their learning from diverse situations was useful to developing ways to cope with the fast-paced and uncertain nature of high performance sport (Rynne and Mallett, 2014).

With these conclusions, I believe that authors, such as Mallett et al. (2016), Occhino et al. (2013), Rynne and Mallett (2012; 2014), and Rynne et al. (2010), shed important light into the opportunities available to Australian high performance coaches in their workplaces, those that they desire to access, those that they regard important to personal and professional progression. While this body of empirical research could be viewed as somewhat light touch in sociological scrutiny, the series of publications provide not only interesting, but also coherent insight into workplace learning of high performance coaches and the challenges faced within these, which represent areas that have received little research attention otherwise. Whether this is due to a scarcity of such "institutional" workplaces, the difficulties associated with gaining research access to environments of high performance sport, or a combination of both, it is noteworthy that among the work that I reviewed for the purpose of my PhD, only Phelan and Griffiths (2018) drew further explicit attention to workplaces of high performance coaches.

Referring to the work of Rynne et al. (2010), the authors emphasised a paucity of studies that focus on practitioner learning in workplaces *in situ*. With a view of learning as an endeavour that is embedded in cultural and social contexts, Phelan and Griffiths (2018) conducted their study in an Olympic High-Performance Centre in the UK. The

authors interpreted their research experiences by drawing on “practice architectures” to emphasise the dynamic nature of workplaces, where cultural-discursive (e.g. language practices), material-economic (e.g. material resources), and social-political (e.g. social positions and relations to others) processes would determine the practice and learning of high performance coaches (Phelan and Griffiths, 2018). The authors suggested their use of an ethnographic approach to their research with six purposefully selected coaches and three administrative staff, with whom they conducted participant observations over a period of ten months as well as interviews on two occasions, in the first and final months of their field-based study.

At the time of the study, the Olympic High-Performance Centre was undergoing a restructuring process, which had led to a revision of its objectives and a substantial turnover of staff. The authors noticed high performance coaches’ tendency to revert to longstanding behaviours and assumptions, proposing that the interpretations of messages that coaches received in the High-Performance Centre, would depend on the personal histories of practitioners and the culture of their sport. Particularly the latter appeared to point towards result-driven outlooks that I would compare to participant perceptions identified in studies by Occhino et al. (2013) and Rynne et al. (2010). At times, Phelan and Griffiths (2018) suggested, these perspectives would isolate coaches in their practice. For coaches in Phelan and Griffiths’ study, it was most difficult to marry new parameters by which success was determined with coaches’ enduring assumptions and routine practises. This particularly applied to the expectation to collaborate with other employees. Above all, newly appointed international coaches appeared to be kept at a distance, because their perspectives of coaching and athletic performance were seen to differ significantly from the established conduct of British

practitioners. This, however, Phelan and Griffiths (2018) cautioned, limited the learning that could occur from social interactions with colleagues at the Olympic High-Performance Centre. In fact, participants were observed to seek advice from practitioners, who coached outside their workplace environments.

In addition, the authors noticed ‘...territorial behaviour...’ in the use of spaces available to coaches at the High-Performance Centre, which participants reiterated in interviews when alluding to the renegotiations of their relations to colleagues, which were necessary since the restructuring of their workplace (Phelan and Griffiths, 2018:14). In consideration of these findings, the authors highlighted that professional environments, such as those found in the Olympic High-Performance Centre, would never cease to develop. Having gained an insight into how those affected by such processes felt and acted, Phelan and Griffiths (2018) prompted managers, developers, and educators to take into consideration established traditions in workplaces and integrate these into new regulations. This would be important to lay the foundations for professional surroundings, which support coaches in feeling that they could profit from contextualised and often-social learning opportunities. In a pursuit of this, it would be of significance also to accept and value the histories that individual practitioners bring to new professional roles, as these could render themselves useful to the learning of others in the workplace. These suggestions, together with the research conducted in Australian workplaces, have reinforced my understandings of the complexities associated with the learning of high performance coaches and strengthened my view of learning as a continuous and diverse endeavour.

Empirical studies of high performance coach education

From the insights discussed so far in this chapter, I recognise the education and learning of high performance coaches as self-directed, frequently informal, and ongoing throughout practitioner careers (e.g. He et al., 2018; Irwin et al., 2004; Phelan and Griffiths, 2018; Rynne et al., 2010; Werthner and Trudel, 2009). Authors tend to report that high performance coaches consider it integral to their development to participate in formal situations of learning, such as those found in coach education programmes, however, often struggle to relate course content to situations in their day-to-day practice (e.g. Consterdine et al., 2013; Mesquita et al., 2014; Nash and Collins, 2006; Nash and Sproule, 2009).

This sub-chapter begins with a discussion of studies that focused on high performance coach education in different countries. In a separate section, I will turn to studies, for the purpose of which authors have drawn on sociological reasoning to make sense of practitioner experiences with high performance coach education. This will be followed by a discussion of research that focused on coach education programmes for high performance coaches, which delivery and assessment occurred in collaboration with tertiary providers.

To discuss high performance coach education in an international context, Callary et al. (2014) studied the provision available in seven countries, including Canada, France, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, New Zealand and Switzerland. The authors aimed to compare whether coach learners (i.e. those, who engage in coach learning) receive opportunities to learn from diverse situations. The authors built on the work by Trudel et al. (2013) and Werthner and Trudel (2006) in their view that learning could occur in mediated (i.e. learning is guided by educators), unmediated (i.e. coaches seek learning in a self-directed manner), and internal instances (i.e. coaches reflect on existing knowledge). Ideally, all of these types should be in the repertoire of high performance coach education to cater for different requirements and preferences of learners.

Callary et al. (2014) recruited seven coach education managers from the above-mentioned countries, who participated in questionnaires and follow-up interviews. Similar to research processes in studies by He et al. (2018) and Reade et al. (2008b), interview conversations were hoped to allow clarification and expansion of perceptions associated with learning on the respective coach education courses. The authors reported that six of the seven programmes followed curricula and were known as “diplomas⁶”; while in New Zealand, coaches completed a bespoke course without set syllabus (Callary et al., 2014). Only in Norway, coaches accumulated credits that counted towards a Bachelor degree at university, with completion of the *Elite coach certification program*. In Germany, coaches were envisaged to use the credits gained from the *Diplom-Trainer-Studium* to apply for a Masters degree at university. At the

⁶ I wish to emphasise that despite the lingual parallel, these outcomes are not to be mistaken with academic diplomas, such as Undergraduate and Postgraduate Diplomas in UK Higher Education. Rather, I am inviting the reader to compare “diplomas” in Callary et al.’s study to “coaching certifications”.

time of study, however, the details of this process had yet to be agreed. In France and Switzerland, governments rewarded completion of the *Diplome d'Etat Superieur* and the *Diploma—Coach Education*, respectively. The former enabled coaches to enter straight into the third year of their coaching license in France and the latter is benchmarked at the highest level of vocational qualifications in Switzerland. At the time of Callary et al.'s (2014) study, sporting federations in Germany, France and the Netherlands decided whether the national provision available to practitioners was obligatory for high performance coaches and if so, how this was rewarded.

Callary et al. (2014) identified further differences in a comparison of features in the provision under study, such as the format of delivery and the amount of practice expected of coaches during the course of their learning journeys. For instance, the objectives defined for the *Diplom-Trainer-Studium* in Germany and the *Elite coach certification program* in Norway appeared to demonstrate an emphasis on learning from reflective practice. This differed from a seeming performance orientation in the specifications reviewed for the *National Coaching Institute (NCI) Advanced Coaching Diploma* in Canada. Further diversity was found in the coaching practice required for successful award completion, expecting practitioners to engage in '...ongoing coaching...' over a period of 24 months and 36 months in Canada and New Zealand, respectively (Callary et al., 2014:158). Five-hundred hours of practice over 20 months were required in France and in Switzerland coaches were expected to complete 400 hours of coaching while completing the 36-month long *Diploma—Coach Education*.

Callary et al. (2014) concluded that the learning experiences, identified in the course material available for the purpose of their study, commonly included classroom-based sessions, coaching practice, and peer discussions. The authors argued that this

interweaving of different approaches to learning could support practitioners, to not only develop competencies, but also to trial and evaluate course content in close connection to individual experiences (Callary et al., 2014).

These suggestions could be considered divergent from comments that followed a study by Mesquita et al. (2014) in the context of Portuguese elite coach education. Their particular attention was on exploring elite coaches' perceptions of valuable learning experiences and opportunities recognised in formal coach education. The authors' interest stemmed from a perceived lack of systematic, in some sports, non-compulsory coach education and the prescriptive, often teacher-led nature of the existing provision. Following semi-structured interviews with six purposefully selected '...top-level sports coaches...', the authors endorsed suggestions from studies, such as Nash and Sproule (2009), Reade et al. (2008a; 2008b), Rynne et al. (2006) when highlighting the value associated with learning from various sources (Mesquita et al., 2014:126). These were reported to include reflection, peer interactions, and day-to-day coaching. Similar to reports by He et al. (2018), according to Mesquita et al. (2014), practitioners were disappointed with Portuguese coach education, where classroom-based delivery and prescriptions of knowledge appeared to prevail.

In principle, however, Mesquita et al. (2014) reported that, participants felt strongly about creating connections between theoretical knowledge and practitioner settings. They voiced a desire to interweave educator-led sessions with, what I would consider "social learning", by discussing the content taught in classroom environments with educators and peer learners. Learning from such social encounters would be most valuable, if it occurred with some guidance from experts in mediated learning situations. Here, the authors reaffirmed findings, such as those found in studies by He

et al. (2018), Werthner and Trudel (2009), with regard to the appreciation that practitioners had for learning in formal settings. Indeed, it was felt that the learning in such situations would represent a crucial pillar to developing professional understandings. Yet, the authors recognised that their participants hoped for changes towards a view of classroom-based learning as a process that extended beyond educator-led settings traditionally associated with formal coach education (Mesquita et al., 2014). Coaches highlighted that this would require those, who led coaches in social learning situations to prepare for their responsibilities as facilitators, not “prescribers”, of learning. At the time of the study, such an expectation was perceived unfeasible in light of a state of affairs in Portuguese sport that favoured longstanding assumptions, hierarchies, and agendas at the expense of progress (Mesquita et al., 2014). Moreover, outside coach education, the authors noted that participants believed their efforts to learn from other practitioners were hindered by a perceived sense of “competition over cooperation” that appeared to prevail among coaches. Here, I would conclude that Mesquita et al. (2014) revealed practitioner comments that could point towards an infancy in the views of those, who manage and organise Portuguese education and learning.

While I would suggest that this culture differs from principles inherent in the UK, where, overall, I perceive more nuanced views of sports coaching, interestingly, authors have reported comparably “negative” perceptions that practitioners associate with formal high performance coach education (e.g. Chesterfield et al., 2010; Jones and Allison, 2014; Townsend and Cushion, 2017). Jones and Allison (2014) conducted longitudinal research of an elite coach education programme within football. The authors conveyed that the studied provision represented the highest qualification that

practitioners could obtain in their sport. Notably, their work is the sole published study that I could access for the purpose of my study, which aimed to gain insight into the experiences of coaches over a period of 18 months, while these were participating in formal coach education. Twenty coaches took part in 18 focus group interviews that centred on their perceptions of coach education. In addition, the authors obtained 19 video diaries, which participants used to keep personal reflections over the course of the study (Jones and Allison, 2014).

The findings reveal that although coaches were not opposed to formal coach education, they identified a lack of relevance in the course content. According to Jones and Allison (2014), major issues were associated with the competency-based nature of delivery and assessments, which practitioners perceived difficult to implement in practice. This was reported to affect coaches' commitment to the course. In regard of practitioner attention to course content, however, the authors contemplated limited openness towards coach education, which could contribute to coaches' mere adoption of '...minor practicalities as opposed to developing a new 'way of thinking'...' when participating in the course under study (Jones and Allison, 2014:115). In fact, the authors argued that coaches' attitudes could have left them preoccupied with course material that was perceived easily applicable to their coaching. This could have led participants also to seek interactions largely with those, who would endorse, not challenge, longstanding beliefs. Further reason to engage with those, who would reinforce existing understandings, could be coaches' desire for security and certainty in otherwise competitive professional environments. I suggest that this issue could be viewed in resemblance to some of the professional situations of high performance coaches in Australia, where researchers identified a comparable importance of trusted

relationships (e.g. Occhino et al., 2013; Rynne and Mallett, 2012; Rynne et al., 2010). Indeed, Jones and Allison reported that their participants held peer learners in high regard and hoped for additional opportunities to learn from each other's expertise, such as group-based work, embedded in the formal environments of coach education (Jones and Allison, 2014).

These conclusions reminded me of the suggestions that Hussain et al. (2012) identified in regard of benefits that informal learning experiences could render to coaches' understandings, if they were implemented in formal coach education. Situating their study in the context of the NCCP in Canada, the authors' particular interest was on establishing processes by which a High Performance Director (HPD) of Triathlon Canada came to design a NCCP programme that was bespoke to coaches' needs (Hussain et al., 2012). Since its establishment in 1974 by the Coaching Association of Canada (CAC), the NCCP has been envisaged to enhance the quality of Canadian coach education (Coaching Association of Canada, 2017). In the first two decades, the NCCP provided competency-based and certified learning opportunities, which included programmes, seminars, and workshops for aspiring and existing coaches (Coaching Association of Canada, 2017). Since the late 1990s, the NCCP has seen revision with underpinnings by constructivist views of learning, envisioned to place problem-based and scenario learning at the core of its provision. This was hoped to support coaches in the transfer of course content into situations encountered in professional environments (Leduc et al., 2012). With the aim of shifting the focus of NCCP courses towards coach learners, greater emphasis was to be placed on the consideration of coaches' knowledge when coach education content was discussed.

Hussain et al. (2012) were interested in the perspective of the HPD of Triathlon Canada, who sought to develop a coach education programme tailored to the needs, roles, and responsibilities of competition-context triathlon coaches. In a series of interviews with the HPD, the authors explored personal experiences, values and beliefs to identify the skills that enabled their participant to establish a programme that allowed individual consideration of practitioner abilities, while adhering to NCCP regulations (Hussain et al., 2012). Based on the perspectives discussed in recurrent research encounters, Hussain et al. (2012) suggested that the HPD valued his academic experience in addition to years of coaching practice. This was most important to develop an appreciation for learning in environments that acknowledged, yet did not place mere focus on assessment and certification.

Interestingly, the authors reported that the NCCP criteria were such that they did not constrain the HPD in the implementation of his vision for coach education. Rather, Hussain et al. (2012) noted that structural constraints, such as frequent staff turnover and a seemingly set agenda in sporting federations (e.g. the CAC), limited the HPD in his efforts to implement a format of coach education that deviated from other NCCP programmes (Potrac and Jones, 2009; Potrac et al., 2002). In fact, at the time of study, the HPD was immersed in conversations with CAC representatives, who, as Hussain et al. (2012) reported, appeared to have responded with doubt towards the ideas of their participant. The authors suggested that the HPD felt as though his arguably unconventional approach to coach education was received with scepticism due to an incongruity with objectives that the CAC seemed to prioritise. To me, these study findings appear to reveal a perceived desire for control in organisations that manage and deliver coach education, which, I believe, could underpin some of the issues

concluded from studies by Hussain et al. (2012), Jones and Allison (2014), and Mesquita et al. (2014). On this basis, tentatively, I propose that those educational settings, which establishment and implementation is in control of managers, such as those that the HPD encountered in Hussain et al.'s (2012) study, could lead to the development of formal coach education that is seen of limited value and impact to coaching practitioners.

Turning to sociological research of high performances coaches' experiences with education and learning, authors aimed '...to offer a more sophisticated level of explanation and abstraction...' (Townsend and Cushion, 2017:532). To this end, researchers have drawn largely on interpretivist and postmodern perspectives to interpret the ways in which coaches defined and interpreted the complexities associated with coach education and learning. To date, particular attention has been awarded to the use of Goffman's dramaturgical interpretation of everyday life (e.g. Chesterfield et al., 2010; Consterdine et al., 2013) and Bourdieu's notions of habitus, field, and capital (e.g. Townsend and Cushion, 2017).

Chesterfield et al. (2010) conducted a study with six Union of European Football Associations Advanced (UEFA A) license coaches, who completed this second-highest UEFA award in the five years prior to the authors' research. Aligning their research within the interpretive research perspective, the authors aimed to unpack processes that shaped coaches' perceptions of content, assessment, and perceived learning on the UEFA A course (Chesterfield et al., 2010). Following semi-structured interviews, the authors iterated negative perceptions of coach education courses as being delivered based on '...prescriptive [and] ...off-the-shelf...' material (Chesterfield et al., 2010:304; Mesquita et al., 2014). According to Chesterfield et al. (2010), coaches were particularly frustrated with educators, who seemed to view practitioners as mere recipients of course content. This was problematic for coaches, as they believed educators disregarded the deep-rooted professional identities that represented integral features of their self-understandings (Chesterfield et al., 2010; Rynne et al., 2010). Consequently, participants in the study by Chesterfield et al. (2010) seemed

resistant to the content taught by coach educators and particularly disregarded course material that did not conform to inherent practitioner beliefs. Only in assessment situations, the authors reported that participants disguised their feelings towards the course.

Practitioners were reported to draw on their “studentship” by reiterating suggestions that coach educators taught to ensure success in course assessments (Graber, 1991, cited in Chesterfield et al., 2010). It appears that coaches perceived it easier to pass assessments, if they complied with course content, than if they were to discuss discrepancies openly with coach educators. In their theoretical interpretation of these findings, the authors drew further on Goffman’s notions of “impression management” and “front” to make sense of how participants managed their interactions with coach educators (Goffman, 1959, cited in Chesterfield et al., 2010). To this end, coaches would ensure to use a “front” of behaviours that led coach educators to believe coaches’ immersion in course content. For instance, regardless of their sincerity, participants adapted their language use and logbook content in ways that were hoped to convince educators of their compliance to behaviours, accepted in the coach education environments of the UEFA A license. With these suggestions, Chesterfield et al. (2010) portrayed yet another environment of formal coach education that was of little value to practitioners. Coaches’ resistance to course content led me to contemplate not only the culture prevalent in the sport at study, but also the extent to which coach educators assumed a view of high performance coaches as expert professionals and mature learners.

These reflections continued following my reading of research conducted by Consterdine et al. (2013), who used dramaturgical theorisation to make sense of a

coach's experience with the theatre and its perceived value to his work as a high performance coach. For the purpose of their single-case study, the authors purposefully selected a practitioner, who was the UK Athletics National Event Coach for High Jump. In a series of interviews and observations, Consterdine et al. (2013) hoped to unpack the complexities and intricacies of self, behaviour and social interaction in coaching. The authors' findings reveal that their participant, in his coaching practice, was drawing heavily from insights developed during his training at the Royal Academy of Drama and Arts (RADA), where he learned how '...to present a credible image of himself as an elite coach...' (Consterdine et al., 2013:128). It was during his time at RADA that the coach was developing an understanding of the importance of voice, space, and adaption of his instructions to various audiences. This stood in contrast to his experiences with coach education provided by UK Athletics in the high performance arena, where the participant perceived the provision to be less translatable to coaching practice. With this, similar to Chesterfield et al. (2010), Jones and Allison (2014), Mesquita et al. (2014), suggestions by Consterdine et al. (2013) bring into question the appropriateness of formal coach education.

In particular, the research conducted by Chesterfield et al. (2010) and Consterdine et al. (2013) is significant to enriching our understandings of thought processes that underpin coaches' perceptions of high performance coach education. Dramaturgical interpretations of the social world have deepened my insight into what coaches thought, why they thought about coach education in certain ways and how they coped with instances they did not perceive valuable to their practice. For instance, Chesterfield et al. (2010) referred to the "impression management" that coaches adopted in assessment situations. Consterdine et al. (2013) made sense of practitioner

conduct in the sense of a “front” that their participant learned to use during his time at RADA. I believe, however, that it is important to explore in greater depth how other stakeholders perceive formal coach education and to gain insight into how they think about their own and others contributions to the development and delivery of courses (e.g. Chesterfield et al., 2010; Jones and Allison, 2014).

Townsend and Cushion (2017) add to the few sociological studies of coach education with their research of the UKCC CL4 award in cricket, which to date, represents the stand-alone in-depth study published in the context of this course. The authors used Bourdieu’s notions of “field, habitus, and capital” to investigate critically coaches’ experiences with elite cricket coach education. Interviews with ten coaches from different UKCC CL4 cohorts and the Level 4 Programme Director revealed that, overall, participants seemed unenthusiastic about the award. Some participants felt apprehensive, even sceptical about the “scientific” course content, which appeared to contradict their ‘...entrenched beliefs...’ and ‘...cultural and ideological assumptions regarding how the game should be played...’ (Townsend and Cushion, 2017:536). The authors reported that coaches often felt frustrated due to their firm conception that scientific principles were unsuitable to establishing explanations for the techniques and tactics they had successfully used for many years. Several participants felt protective of their legitimate knowledge, which was embedded in the cultural understandings of cricket. This was particularly common for coach learners, who were or had been professional players and high-level coaches.

Coaches and the Performance Director also noticed imbalances in the social positions of coach learners in UKCC CL4 cohorts, feeling that these were closely related to reputation. Here, the authors used Bourdieu’s work to suggest that our perceptions of

“self” would not stand merely in relation to our actions, but were shaped further by the status we hold in social settings (Bourdieu, 1990, cited in Townsend and Cushion, 2017). In particular, Townsend and Cushion drew attention to the power disparity that appeared to exist among coach learners, who completed the award. Some coaches were apprehensive to contribute to discussions during residential events because of the presence of other practitioners, who were believed to be more superior due to their achievements in cricket. The authors suggested that the feelings of inferiority to other practitioners, who were seen to hold more ‘...powerful symbolic capital within the Level 4...’ hindered coaches to interact freely (Townsend and Cushion, 2017:540). In turn, this could limit coaches’ perceived learning from dialogues on the UKCC CL4 award.

With these study findings, Townsend and Cushion (2017) offer useful perspectives from coaches, who completed the UKCC CL4 award at different moments in time. The theoretical interpretations of their study findings add depth to my understandings of hierarchies and engrained beliefs that appear to shape coaches’ perceptions of learning from formal coach education (e.g. Jones and Allison, 2014; Mesquita et al., 2014). In iteration of my comments on interpretivist studies of high performance coach education, I believe that it will be valuable to shed light on the ways in which educators and managers act and interact with others. Although Townsend and Cushion (2017) presented the perspectives of the Performance Director, so far my insights stem only from this participant’s viewpoint in the sport of cricket. It will be useful to establish whether educators and managers involved in other environments of high performance coach education share similar assumptions to those that the Performance Director described to be inherent in the culture of cricket (e.g. former

elite players will become effective coaches). Indeed, I suggest that we have yet to explore concurrently the perspectives of different stakeholders to gain a more complete picture of the complexities associated with high performance coach education.

Tertiary providers in high performance coach education

Based on coaches' largely "negative" perceptions of high performance coach education, which I outlined in the previous sections, I wish to discuss explicitly studies in which researchers investigated practitioner perceptions of high performance coach education, which was offered in collaboration with tertiary providers.

Of the studies discussed so far, Rynne and Mallett (2014), for instance, connected high performance coaches' HE studies to feelings of confidence and competence. Similar reports follow from a study by Galvan et al. (2012), who investigated formal coach education for high performance cricket coaches on the New Zealand Cricket (NZC) Level 3 award. As the highest qualification in NZC coach education, formerly, this award targeted high performance coaches exclusively and focused on the technical nuances of cricket. With the introduction of the *Coach Development Framework* (CDF), NZC identified the need to retreat from its established conceptions of the Level 3 award and introduced a HEi as a tertiary provider in an attempt to support coaches' development beyond cricket-specific understandings.

NZC utilised the autonomy offered to sporting federations that enabled coach education designs that fit with the distinct characteristics of their sport and permitted partnerships with third parties. According to Galvan et al. (2012), the decision of coach education developers to collaborate with a New Zealand HEi derived from insights gained into formats of teacher education that stress the significance of engaging students in understanding pedagogical underpinnings in addition to subject-specific knowledge. The outcome of the partnership represented a two-year programme for high performance coaches during which NZC coach educators and university staff deliver four weekends focussing on: '...(1) leadership, (2) planning and management,

(3) self-development and (4) the coaching process...' (Galvan et al., 2012:126). For the purpose of their study, the authors selected six cricket coaches, who had completed the NZC Level 3 award between 2007 and 2009, and agreed to participate in in-depth interviews. In addition, the authors reviewed the content of aforementioned modules and coaches' feedback, given in response to the course.

Galvan et al. (2012) reported that participants affirmed having felt conceived merely as passive learners that could be instilled with new knowledge by the coach educators they had met before the NZC Level 3 award. According to study findings, the latter contrasted previous experiences and led coaches to feel as though educators had finally considered and challenged their practitioner knowledge. As a result, it was proposed that coaches felt encouraged to advance their understandings of intra- and interpersonal processes that shaped coaching practice. The authors continued to suggest that participants hoped that such approaches to learning would be mirrored at the lower levels of coach education, too, as this would enable practitioners to develop critical understandings gradually in a '...coherent and logical...' manner (Galvan et al., 2012:132). I would suggest that the academic delivery and assessment at this "late" stage in coaches' educational journey could be associated with the difficulties that some coaches perceived when implementing theoretical content in coaching practice. As an example, although coaches believed they had begun to reflect on their practice, the authors suggested that practitioners struggled to be critical in these contemplations (Galvan et al., 2012). For this reason, Galvan et al. (2012) proposed that it would be useful for coach educators to challenge learner understandings in ways that would support the interweaving of independent, critical reflection and coaches' practice.

Similar to Mesquita et al. (2014), the authors emphasised the important role that educators held as facilitators, who ought to support coach learning (Galvan et al., 2012). This view of coach educators as, what I would term “significant others”, was reiterated by Mallett and Dickens (2009), whose writing centred on Australian postgraduate provision available to high performance coaches. To contextualise their positional paper, the authors noted that in 1991, the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) in collaboration with the School of Human Movement Studies (HMS) at the University of Queensland (UQ) established a Graduate Diploma of Elite Sports Coaching. An initial milestone in coach education, Mallett and Dickens (2009) suggested that this diploma was poorly attended, characterised by partially outdated course material and inconsistent in academic rigor. In light of this, in 2001, the ASC and HMS at UQ established online postgraduate programmes for scholarship coaches of the Australian Institute of Sport within the National Coaching Scholarship Program (NCSP) in addition to other existing and aspiring, high performance coaches. Mallett and Dickens (2009) suggested that the aim was to establish easily accessible provision that challenged coaches’ thinking with robust academic underpinnings. Although practitioners were seen as mature learners, course lecturers supported their self-directed efforts by facilitating dialogues with peers and supporting them to complete assessments that were relevant to their professional environments.

In contrast to studies that reported limited transferability of formal coach education into practice, such as Jones and Allison (2014), Mesquita et al. (2014), or Townsend and Cushion (2017), Mallett and Dickens (2009) construed the online provision at the centre of their paper as a significant means to enhancing coaches’ understandings. The authors felt that the delivery was “authentic” given the interweaving of opportunities

for coach learners to create associations between assessments and coaching practice. Coach educators represented key individuals in the facilitation of this process (Mallett and Dickens, 2009). Indeed, Mallett et al. (2013) suggested that practitioners seem to value their participation in postgraduate provision for regular interactions with other professionals, opportunities to deepen their critical thinking skills, and for a perceived increase in confidence and competence. Essential to developing these perspectives, however, were delivery and assessment layouts that corresponded with practitioner backgrounds. It would appear that the developers and educators of the online provision discussed by Mallett and Dickens (2009), recognised coaches as mature learners, who would bring an array of skills to educational settings. In some respect, these preliminary suggestions could be interpreted as pointing towards a nature of coach education that is in line with suggestions articulated by authors, such as Rynne et al. (2006), Werthner and Trudel (2009), who prompted stakeholders to move away from an emphasis on accreditation and towards view of formal coach education that is integrated with coaches' practice.

I have identified further support for such views of learning in settings of formal coach education that Araya et al. (2015) discussed. The authors studied coaches' perceptions of a Masters degree that was designed for performance coaches and elite athletes, who aspired to become coaches. To complete the course, existing and aspiring coaches from different sports participate in online modules and face-to-face workshops for one year full-time or two years part-time (Araya et al., 2015). Following semi-structured interviews with 17 coaches, who had completed the course or were in the process of doing so at the time of the study, Araya et al. (2015) suggested that participants felt as though course developers and educators on the Masters degree, had been successful

in interweaving “formal” classroom environments with informal, social instances of learning. The authors noted in their research paper that this was perceived from the embedded discussions led during face-to-face workshops, an emphasis on reflective practice and support of coaches when seeking to interweave content discussed on the course with practitioner experiences. In some iteration of findings from studies, such as Jones and Allison (2014), Nash and Sproule (2009), Reade et al. (2008a; 2008b), and Rynne et al. (2006), the authors reported that coaches valued the learning from social interactions with peer professionals. In a sense, these practices could be interpreted in further response to calls from authors, who encourage “holistic” approaches to coaches’ educational experiences that place practitioners at the centre of the learning process (e.g. Rynne and Mallett, 2014; Werthner and Trudel, 2009).

Moreover, Araya et al. (2015) offered that their participants believed they had profited from guided dialogues, which created a sense of community and supported coaches in establishing rapport with peers. The authors attributed the perceived bond among coach learners to the longevity of the Masters degree, which was perceived to facilitate the development of relationships with peer learners and coach educators. These conclusions deviate from suggestions discussed earlier in this chapter, which revealed contested and competitive coaching environments that left some coaches reluctant to engage with colleagues (e.g. Mesquita et al., 2014; Occhino et al., 2013; Phelan and Griffiths, 2018). With this, the authors rendered insightful initial suggestions on educational formats that appear to interweave traditional classroom situations with opportunities of informal learning (e.g. Araya et al., 2015; Galvan et al., 2012; Mallett and Dickens, 2009).

A paucity prevails, however, of studies concerned with the longitudinal engagement of coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers with postgraduate high performance coach education. In iteration of my comments earlier in this section, I believe that the study of different stakeholder perspectives would render significance to gaining more in-depth understandings of the value and impact of high performance coach education delivered in collaboration with tertiary providers.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to discuss the understandings gained from research studies that relate to high performance coach education and learning. To date, authors have demonstrated that high performance coaches' learning can be considered ongoing and varied between practitioners (e.g. Nash and Sproule, 2009; Rynne et al., 2006; Werthner and Trudel, 2009). A number of studies suggested that coaches are self-directed and active in seeking opportunities to learn, including formal coach education, coaching practice, former athletic experiences, reflection and evaluation of practice, material resources (e.g. videos, internet) and peer interactions (e.g. Mesquita et al., 2014; Nash and Sproule, 2009; Phelan and Griffiths, 2018; Reade et al., 2008a; 2008b; Rynne et al., 2010).

Initial conclusions from a limited number of studies on the postgraduate provision for high performance coaches in Australia (Araya et al., 2015; Mallett and Dickens, 2009) and New Zealand (Galvan et al., 2012) have offered insight into settings of formal coach education that appear to meet coaches' desire for dialogues with peer learners and coach educators. Largely, however, the opinions of those, who complete such formal provision reveal a nature of coach education that is often classroom-based, educator-led, and of little use to coaches (Chesterfield et al., 2010; Jones and Allison, 2014; Mesquita et al., 2014; Townsend and Cushion, 2017).

Some authors strengthened their critiques of high performance coach education with the adoption of sociological lenses (Chesterfield et al., 2010; Consterdine et al., 2013; Townsend and Cushion, 2017). From these studies, it is evident that some resistance would appear to exist among high performance coaches to adopt course content that

is believed to deviate from practitioner beliefs (Chesterfield et al., 2010; Jones and Allison, 2014). Coaches tend to disguise their opinions, however, when interacting with educators in a hope that this would ensure assessment success (Chesterfield et al., 2010). While researchers are beginning to recognise the importance that coach educators hold in facilitating the learning of high performance coaches (e.g. Galvan et al., 2012; Mesquita et al., 2014), my understandings have derived largely from studies that delivered insight into the perspectives of coaches, who completed formal coach education (e.g. Araya et al., 2015; Chesterfield et al., 2010; Jones and Allison, 2014).

It would be interesting to gain insight into the experiences, actions and interactions of different stakeholders, such as coach educators and coach education managers, who are involved in processes of high performance coach education. To develop these understandings, it will be useful to conduct longitudinal research of social processes in high performance coach education. To date, ethnographic studies published on high performance coach education and learning remain scarce (Table 1). In a recent paper by Phelan and Griffiths (2018), the researchers immersed themselves in an Olympic High-Performance Centre for ten months to explore workplace resources, opportunities and practitioner learning over time. It was hoped that the researchers' "lived experiences" with day-to-day practices of coaches and administrators would render in-depth understandings of the material, social, and cultural nuances of learning *in situ* (Phelan and Griffiths, 2018). Only one further study by Jones and Allison (2014) set their research in situations of high performance coach education. The authors "followed" practitioners over 18 months by conducting multiple focus group interviews and studying the video diaries that coach learners kept throughout the completion of a coach education programme.

In light of the limited studies adopting longitudinal methodologies to their research, I suggest that there is a need to explore the diverse perceptions from prolonged research engagement *with* stakeholders *in* the imminent environments of high performance coach education. I believe that we have yet to make sense of the nature, value, and impact of high performance coach education on coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers over time. This is important to identify whether, and if so how, the perspectives of different stakeholders fluctuate while engaging with situations of high performance coach education. To this end, it is important to conduct sociological interpretations of the individual and social processes of stakeholders to understand in greater depth how coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers act and interact in environments of high performance coach education.

Chapter 4. Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the methodological, theoretical, and paradigmatic considerations that shaped this project. To begin, I will present my reading of interpretivism to position the nature of my thinking and writing. Then, I will recognise different phases in the historical development of symbolic interactionism to portray that the reasoning of its theorists has represented far from a unified school of thought. Needless to say, the choices available to any researcher regarding the theoretical lens they adopt are numerous. After discussions with peers in the supervisory team, reading a number of PhDs and journal papers, it was symbolic interactionism and the writing of symbolic interactionists that I turned to. For me, there seemed to be an alignment with what I was witnessing over the course of my research and traditional symbolic interactionist theorisation.

Moreover, in the present chapter, I will foreground the use of ethnography as a methodological choice, which has guided my fieldwork. Then, I will identify how I have dealt with my roles, responsibilities, and ethical considerations that shaped my research conduct. This will be followed by an account of the research methods I adopted and a discussion of data interpretation and “write up” as iterative processes (Smith and Sparkes, 2016). To conclude, I will turn to my understandings of research quality to demonstrate how I have attempted to achieve trustworthiness and transparency in this thesis.

My research positioning

In the social sciences, it was suggested that the worldviews of researchers would determine the perspectives we take in our conduct of empirical studies (Crotty, 1998). To define how we interpret our surroundings, it is useful to consider philosophical questions that allow a positioning of our work in the wider research landscape. This facilitates also the recognition of methodological and theoretical approaches that align with our particular worldviews. The perspectives that authors have adopted in studies of the education and learning of high performance coaches represent positivism (e.g. Erickson et al., 2007), interpretivism (e.g. Chesterfield et al., 2010; Consterdine et al., 2013), and postmodernist sociology (e.g. Townsend and Cushion, 2017). When considering these for the purpose of my research, I felt drawn to the interpretivist paradigm, which strengthened my belief that the world I am living in comprises of multiple social realities, in which individuals represent active agents when engaging in intra- and interpersonal encounters (Williams, 2016).

In the study of diverse realities, it was suggested that interpretivist researchers are considerate of the understandings that shape people's actions in different ways (Hammersley, 2012). Commonly, Flyvbjerg (2001) argued that attention is drawn to the study of interests, meanings and values that human beings define in social environments. For instance, Chesterfield et al. (2010) took an interpretivist approach to understand in greater depth the perceptions that coach learners defined in the social settings of formal coach education. Similarly, Consterdine et al. (2013) positioned their work with interpretivism to study how and, why in certain ways, a coach presented himself in the social arena of high performance sport. To support my

own research positioning, I wish to refer to ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions associated with interpretivist understandings.

Ontology is concerned with questions of ‘...’what is’, with the nature of existence, with the structure of reality...’ (Crotty, 1998:10). Williams (2016) referred to matters of ontology as relating to our views about the nature of those things, which exist in our surroundings. As an interpretivist researcher, I assume the existence of faceted social realities, which individuals create and re-create through interactions (Hammersley, 2012). There is an argument, one that I support, that not only is interpretivism a methodological approach, but it also spills over into the way that researchers view their own lives. For me, it is not a tool to be picked up, applied, then dropped, but to be embedded in who I am and the way that I see others, myself and my existence. I have viewed realities to be dynamic and ever changing, closely aligned with the alterations that we, as individuals, make to our perceptions in light of cultural, political and social experiences (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2012). This, however, does not imply that I propose a world that exists merely in my imagination (Potrac et al., 2014). Rather, I assume that my thoughts shape the interpretations and meanings I define from the actions of others and me (Flick et al., 2004; Mack, 2010). Thus, interpretivist ontology could be considered ‘...internalist-idealist/relativist...’ as reality exists dependent upon the perceptions of individuals, who actively participate in the social world (Potrac et al., 2014:32).

Given this interpretation of reality and knowledge, Pascale (2011) proposed an interwoven understanding of ontology and epistemology. Epistemology attempts to answer questions concerning the knowledge that researchers develop in social realities (Crotty, 1998). Epistemological considerations represent ‘...the philosophical

underpinning of methodology...' that relate to assumptions of researchers, research, and those we research (Williams, 2016:37). In this sense, I believe that I am developing knowledge by translating and transferring the understandings I gain from my engagement in different social environments. Within this, I have naturally adopted a '...subjectivist epistemology...' given my understanding of knowledge as individually and socially constructed (Potrac et al., 2014:32). This perspective has enforced my commitment to act reflexively in considering the knowledge I gained prior to my study, and the assumptions I have developed throughout my research (Lincoln and Guba, 2000; Venkatesh, 2013). I have aimed to deepen my own understanding, but also to expand our existing knowledge of the subjective meanings that coaches, coach educators and coach education managers define in situations of high performance coach education on the UKCC CL4 award.

To this end, I drew on idiographic methodology that focuses on '...contingent, unique, and often subjective phenomena...' (Mallett and Tinning, 2014:17). The overarching aim is to provide in-depth accounts of selected cases, such as one or more persons, organisations or occasions. This approach is valuable to interpretivist researchers, since it supports emphasis on the diverse perspectives of those, who are at the centre of qualitative inquiry (Markula and Silk, 2011). Potrac et al. (2014) emphasised its value when conducting interpretivist research in settings of sports coaching, as this view of methodology enables researchers to understand in greater depth how key stakeholders may arrive at different interpretations of the complexities inherent in coaching environments. For the purpose of my study, this was useful to develop diverse forms of rapport with different coaches, coach educators, and coach education

managers, who disclosed thoughts and feelings in ways that were distinct to them as individuals.

In my pursuit to uncover these individual and social intricacies, I have embraced my role as an active agent by supporting and guiding my participants in recollections of their views (Talmage, 2012). I interacted with stakeholders recurrently to make sense of their experiences and perceptions, which, I believe to fluctuate over time (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Pascale, 2011). For this reason, I opted for a longitudinal research design, which represented a vital pillar of my methodology as ‘... a domain or a map ...the underlying sets of beliefs...’ that led me to choose ‘...one set of research methods over another...’ (Wahyuni, 2012:72). I immersed myself recurrently in environments of the UKCC CL4 award to engage in context-specific and interpersonal processes of ‘...meaning-making...’ (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2012:99).

The confidence to present my own readings of interpretivism has evolved over time.

When writing this chapter, I am reminded of the process of accustoming my thinking:

I assumed I would read about interpretivism and use it in text. I realised it was not about reading and reciting content. Bill challenged me to develop my own position within interpretivist thinking. My biggest hurdle was to let go of linearity, certainty, narrow-mindedness that were significant during my BSc studies. This made me nervous. Despite my interest in people, stepping into the sociological notions of interpretivism was a huge step. No, it was a loop. It represented a move away from my need to anticipate and know exactly what I will do, say, and write. (Reflexive notes written at home in January 2018)

Although I recognise that I firmed my positioning as I progressed with my PhD study, I knew from the beginning that the objectives of my research would be to interpret stakeholder perceptions as well as the perspectives I gained from conducting fieldwork in situations of the UKCC CL4 award. Through this process, I have come to recognise my positioning as a reflexive interpretivist researcher.

My reading of symbolic interactionism

In my methodological considerations within interpretivism, I adopted a leaning towards, what I would term, “traditional” symbolic interactionism, while recognising that the interpretivist perspective comprises of further theoretical and philosophical traditions, such as hermeneutics, phenomenology, ethnomethodology, and dramaturgy (Potrac et al., 2014). For the purpose of my study, I awarded particular attention to the meanings that my participants and I defined from interactions with others and ourselves on the UKCC CL4 award. These, I considered closely aligned with our experiences, values and beliefs (Musolf, 2003). Indeed, in a symbolic interactionist interpretation of the social world, Berg (2009) noted that our behaviours would be considered intertwined with our interpretations. He continued to suggest that we would create symbols for the things we experience, which we communicate in inter- and intrapersonal encounters.

With this in mind, I felt that symbolic interactionism as a ‘...theory of experience and a theory of social structure...’ would offer a range of theoretical frameworks, which I hoped to align with the research questions I sought to answer (Denzin, 1992:3).

Symbolic interactionism has several strands, which reflect influences from phenomenology, pragmatism, and ongoing developments (Rock, 1979). To outline the work and theorisation undertaken at different moments in time, I wish to refer to Denzin (1992), who presented symbolic interactionism in several phases.

In the canonical phase (1890 – 1932), pragmatism represented a common perspective that theorists drew upon to interpret the social world (Denzin, 1992). During this time, Dewey, James, Cooley, and Mead were among key theorists, who set forth

interactionist interpretations of reality. Cooley and later James argued that our definitions of self were shaped by the interactions with our social environments (Denzin, 1992). James, similar to Dewey, advocated phenomenological interpretations of social life, proposing that this would possess a changing character. With this, the theorists challenged traditional interpretations of human conduct as a system of “stimulus and response” (Denzin, 1992; Musolf, 2003).

Mead appeared to lean more towards naturalistic and pragmatic perspectives of consciousness and interaction, which were recognised in the seeming confidence the theorist associated with scientific principles in his research of societal issues in Chicago (Carreira da Silva, 2007; Reynolds, 2003). Mead’s 1934 work, which is now accessible as an assortment of his essays, was collated and published posthumously. This occurred at a time that Denzin (1992) associated with the empirical/theoretical phase of symbolic interactionism (1933 – 1950). During this period, Blumer, Mead’s most noted student, named symbolic interactionism. Among Hughes and other “second generation” interactionists, he was devoted to the study of social life. Blumer (1969) defined three premises that underpinned his understanding of symbolic interactionism; in summary, he proposed:

- i. We, human beings, act toward “objects” or “things” based on the meanings we define. Such things comprise of material sources, people and their behaviours, institutions, and the diverse situations that we manage in our daily lives.
- ii. The meanings of the aforementioned things derive from social interactions with them in various surroundings.

- iii. The meanings we define as individuals of the things we encounter are not static. Naturally, some meanings are more permanent, such as our values or moral definitions, than others (e.g. fashion style). Yet, meanings alter over time through an interpretive process that we conduct within our environment.

It is my understanding that Blumer considered interpersonal encounters as instances, where symbolic interaction occurred. Similar to his forerunners, Blumer recognised human beings as active agents, who engage in interpretive processes in social environments. The theorist adopted this view in his research of urban crises in Chicago (Outhwaite, 2005). During this time, symbolic interactionist studies became associated increasingly with the University of Chicago, which may have contributed to its reputation as “Chicago School” or “Chicago interactionist” tradition (Denzin, 1992; Pascale, 2011).

In the latter half of the twentieth century, symbolic interactionism saw increasing diversity to research traditions, which Denzin (1992) recognised in its third and fourth generations between 1951 and 1970. For instance, Erving Goffman, who completed his doctorate at the University of Chicago, applied his understandings to dramaturgical studies of the presentation of self in everyday life (Goffman, 1956). Further interest in self and social life was demonstrated by Anselm Strauss, a student of Blumer, who focused on symbolic interactionist interpretations of organisational settings and professional lives (Baszanger, 1998). In his writing, Strauss acknowledged a transformative nature of identity, recognising turning points as significant moments that would shape the ways in which we evolved our sense of self (e.g. Strauss, 1959). His work could be interpreted similar to some of Becker’s writing, in which the theorist

drew on interactionist assumptions to make sense of processes and changes that occurred in organisational contexts (Denzin, 1992).

It is during this time, too, that researchers, such as Manford Kuhn, distanced their work from situational interpretations of symbolic interactionism and instead committed ‘...to a valid, testable, empirical, symbolic interactionist theory of human behaviour...’ (Denzin, 1992:12). It seemed important to Kuhn to determine a distinct meaning of self before studying its relationship to the social environment, which led to studies that were characterised by hypothesis testing and variable measuring (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000). This structural strand of symbolic interactionism has been pursued since and includes work by other researchers, who developed theories to understand identity as a hierarchical and structured concept (e.g. Burke and Stets, 2009; McCall and Simmons, 1978; Stryker, 1980). McPhail and Rexroat (1979) proposed that such structural interpretations of symbolic interactionism could stem from a seemingly unclear relationship between scientific concepts and the work of Blumer and his forerunners. Critics also perceived a disconnection in situational symbolic interactionist reasoning between sociological interpretations of “micro” and “macro” levels of the social world (Lee, 1990).

As one would expect with any social theory, symbolic interactionists and their writings have responded to modernity and those writing within this genre have moulded symbolic interactionism to deal with current social issues. For instance, authors have drawn on symbolic interactionist reasoning in ethnomethodology (e.g. Garfinkel, 1967), phenomenology (e.g. Gurevitch, 1990), feminist writings (e.g. Jackson, 2001), postmodern interpretations of self (e.g. Holstein and Gubrium, 2000), and cultural

studies (e.g. Denzin, 1992)⁷. Referring to Blumer's work in particular, Nelson et al. (2016) suggested that symbolic interactionist reasoning could be valuable also when studying coach education and learning. The authors suggested that stakeholders, such as coaches (coach learners), coach educators, and coach education managers, would use physical (e.g. course material), social (e.g. exchanges with co-workers), and abstract (e.g. values, beliefs) "objects" or "things" when acting and interacting in certain ways. The meanings of those things would be defined from situations encountered in the past, in the present, and in anticipation of the future. Nelson et al. (2016) offered that stakeholders would engage in symbolic interactions to make sense of the thoughts, meanings, and behaviours that others reveal.

Different encounters between coach learners and coach educators, managers and educators, or managers and learners would lead to various professional and personal relations among these key stakeholders (Nelson et al., 2016). When studying situations, such as those that Nelson et al. (2016) identified in contexts of coach education and learning, researchers tend to use self-narratives (e.g. McCabe and Foster, 2006), observations and interview forms (e.g. Prasad, 1993) to understand in greater depth how individuals define and interpret interactive processes (Berg, 2009; Cohen et al., 2007; Sands, 2002).

Although symbolic interactionism has evolved, I recognise key tenets that have been integral to developing my understanding of the research tradition. For instance, meaning and meaning-making are fundamental to symbolic interactionist interpretations of the social world (Denzin, 1992). As individuals, we create meanings,

⁷ This is not an exhaustive list. With selected examples, I wish to emphasise that authors have continued to develop symbolic interactionist reasoning beyond Blumer's suggestions.

adapt and interpret them in an ongoing process of interactions with others and ourselves. To this end, we use language as an integral tool that allows us to communicate our thoughts. For this reason, we are not only social, but also active agents when creating and redefining meanings in our respective surroundings (Blumer, 1969). The interpretations of our own and the actions of others are significant to developing and altering our understandings of self. Experiences differ between individuals and subsequently inform our interpretations of self and the social world in different ways.

To study how individuals interpret these individual and interpersonal processes, researchers have adopted subjective research approaches to those they study ‘...through observing them, talking and acting in their everyday lives...’ (Charon, 2010:86). I have drawn on these positions when making sense of the experiences, thoughts, and meanings that coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers voiced in relation to environments of the UKCC CL4 award. Upon reflection, I am reminded that alternative avenues would exist to accomplish this, however, I have arrived at my interpretations of symbolic interactionism by considering my research aims, my life experiences and the ways in which I view myself and others in the social world.

My ethnographically inspired methodology

The origins of ethnography lie in American cultural anthropology, British social anthropology, and, later, in the Chicago School of Sociology (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; O'Reilly, 2005). In the nineteenth century, the focus of ethnographic inquiry was on studying cultures and social groups, unknown to Western research communities. Ethnographers assumed that they would gain in-depth understandings of individuals and their conduct, if they participated in situations under study (Prus, 1996). Researchers, anthropologists in particular, travelled to often non-Western locations, where they lived with people for prolonged periods, commonly for one year or longer (Fine, 1993; O'Reilly, 2005). In field studies, ethnographers sought not only to conduct studies *with* participants, but *in* their “natural” environments. This was envisaged to help develop familiarity with the lives of the individuals and social groups, who were at the centre of research endeavours (Deegan, 2001; Prus, 1996). The aim of ethnographic research was to ‘...document and interpret their distinctive ways of life, and the beliefs and values integral to it’ (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:1).

Throughout the twentieth century, ethnographic research became relevant to sociological studies that investigated the effects of urban and industrial developments in towns, villages, and cities. Notably, researchers at the University of Chicago shaped the development of ethnographic research with studies of social life in suburbs of the growing city, engaging largely in daily face-to-face interactions in various locations in Chicago (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Prus, 1996). These field studies became renowned as the “Chicago ethnographies” (Deegan, 2001). During this time, Herbert Blumer, Everett Hughes and Anselm Strauss were among those theorists, who advocated ethnography as a methodological approach to gaining research insights

‘...that may not be revealed ...to an outsider’ (Rock, 2001:29). In the latter half of the twentieth century, researchers conducted ethnographic inquiries to explore questions relating to groups and social processes in a variety of settings (Atkinson et al., 2001).

For instance, ethnography was adopted in studies of the medical and other health professions (e.g. Long et al., 2008), educational settings (e.g. Dann et al. 2018; Liljedahl et al., 2017), deviant behaviours (e.g. Hobbs, 1997), film and popular culture (e.g. Denzin, 2003), technology (e.g. Nguyen et al., 2006) and sporting contexts (e.g. MacPhail, 2004; Sands, 2002; Purdy et al., 2008)⁸. As suggested in chapter 3, to date, ethnographic studies in the context of high performance coach education and learning remain scarce. Only Phelan and Griffiths (2018) sought to understand the lived experiences of participants in their ethnography with coaches and administrative staff in an Olympic High-Performance Centre in the UK.

With the increased use of ethnography in sociological inquiry, researchers have begun to distance their work from early anthropological efforts to provide “accurate” images of social life (McCall, 2006). While this is not to suggest that research moved away from being pursued with methodological scrutiny, the importance of the ethnographic fieldworker and the wide spread application of ethnography, could have contributed to the lack of a universal definition of ethnography. Nevertheless, several key values guide researchers in this form of inquiry, which I wish to discuss before I describe the elements I incorporated throughout my PhD study.

Ethnographers commit to studying environments over prolonged periods and participate in the contexts of those they study (McCall, 2006). Ethnographic research is

⁸ This is not an exhaustive list of themes that researchers have studied. With these examples, I wish to point towards the variety of areas, in which ethnographic research has been conducted.

set “in the field” and often unstructured in surroundings that are considered natural to the researched (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). It is common for researchers to begin their fieldwork without fixed research design and to generate categories of interest at the later stages of analysis, interpretation, and writing (Wolcott, 2008). This is where it could be suggested that the ethnographic research process is an iterative one that allows the researcher to evolve the study design over the course of their fieldwork (O’Reilly, 2005).

In the field, researchers tend to create an awareness of their own and others’ positions, roles and responsibilities. This occurs in negotiation with those, at the centre of the study and with gatekeepers (i.e. those individuals, who facilitate access to the research field), who represent crucial contacts (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; McCall, 2006). Common focus in the research field is on engaging with one or a limited number of cases over prolonged periods, such as one particular organisation or social group. This is hoped to support the creation of rich accounts from “lived experiences” (Smith et al., 2014). To accomplish this, ethnographers use multiple research methods, which commonly include participant observations and interviews as well as often-unstructured naturally occurring conversations and informal observations (McCall, 2006; O’Reilly, 2005). In the analysis and interpretation of their experiences, ethnographers tend to draw on tacit and explicit information recorded in field notes to interpret and contextualise the meanings, perceptions and implications of ‘...human actions and institutional practices’ (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:3). Explorative approaches are valuable to the longitudinal fieldwork in order to study various processes in people’s lives, their interpretations and their views of others and themselves in social surroundings (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007).

For the purpose of my PhD, I drew on my interpretations of ethnography to engage in, what I would consider, ethnographically inspired research. It has been important to me to acknowledge that my research was not an ethnography, as I did not focus primarily on understanding the culture inherent in environments of the UKCC CL4 award from the perspectives of those, who engaged with it. Moreover, my “lived experiences” of high performance coach education occurred in selected learning environments of the UKCC CL4 award with coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers (Higginbottom et al., 2013; Liljedahl et al., 2017). Nevertheless, I drew on ethnographic assumptions in my prolonged engagement in situations of high performance coach education to develop in-depth understandings of individual and social aspects that shaped the perceptions of learning in these settings (Finlay and Gough, 2008). In addition to these methodological considerations, my financial and temporal boundaries led to my research in the field over a period of 18 months (Wolcott, 1995; 1998). This helped me develop relationships with those I researched, to revisit thoughts and opinions, to refine the questions I asked and to appreciate unexpected and mundane observations (Sparkes and Smith, 2014; Wolcott, 2008).

I believe that my implementation of ethnographic assumptions allowed me “to look behind the curtain” of what was obvious (Atkinson, 2017; Ellis, 2004). Recognising myself as an active contributor to my research field, I have been reflexive in relation to how stakeholders in my study and I interpreted social situations. Although, I understand that some authors will not share my perspective of ethnographically inspired work, it is something that I have become comfortable to suggest following my reading of relevant methodological texts (e.g. Atkinson et al. 2001; Atkinson, 2017; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Wolcott, 1995; 1998).

Participants

When my supervisors and I commenced thinking about who we desired to participate in my study, we reflected on numerous thoughts (Koro-Ljungberg, 2016; Tracy, 2013). These included consideration of the key stakeholders, who were involved in the establishment, implementation, delivery, and completion of the UKCC CL4 award, as well as the resources and time I had available to complete my PhD research. We also took into account our research aims and our commitment to the goals that Susan, my gatekeeper, who managed the UKCC CL4 award across GBs and HEIs, desired to meet on behalf of scUK. Overall, it was important to align my research with academic standards and practitioner interests (Li, 2008). To meet these demands, I engaged in purposive recruitment of participants, which meant that I deliberately selected individuals to gain in-depth understandings of the UKCC CL4 award (Maxwell, 2009). To this end, I defined a set of criteria for coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers in order to participate in my study (Edwards and Holland, 2013; Flick, 2009; Kvale, 2007).

I sought to engage with coaches (i.e. coach learners), who had completed a UKCC CL4 award or were in the process of doing so at the time of my PhD. I was keen to engage with educators, who delivered to practitioners on the UKCC CL4 award at the time of my study and those, who had experience with this process. This group of participants included HEi lecturers and GB coach educators. In my recruitment of coach education managers, I aimed to engage with those, who had gained insight into the establishment, implementation, and management of the UKCC CL4 award. This has led to my engagement with 60 participants (Table 2).

Table 2. PhD participant numbers.

Participant group	Number of participants
Coaches	32
Coach educators / HEi lecturers	19
Coach education managers	9
Total	60

Fifty-three out of 60 participants engaged with the British Judo Association (BJA) UKCC CL4 award or the British Canoeing (BC) UKCC CL4 award. Particularly important to establishing rapport with coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers in these environments, were three scUK coach education managers and my gatekeepers Susan, George and Michael. I will introduce them and their roles in the subsequent section, where I will write about the importance of gatekeepers when desiring to gain access to the research field.

For further participant recruitment, I used my attendance at conferences, such as the UKCC Coach Level 4 Conference and the International Council for Coaching Excellence (ICCE) Conference in 2015 to recruit stakeholders, who knew about high performance coach education, other than the UKCC CL4 award. I was keen to learn more about their views, if it became apparent from initial conversations that conference delegates have had informed opinions of high performance coach education and learning (Edwards and Holland, 2013). Upon reflection, I recognise my motives were two-fold; I found comfort in engaging with all those, who wished to participate in my study and met the criteria for participation. Moreover, I perceived additional views of those, who could relate to my study from “outside” of the UKCC CL4 award, enriching of my research

experiences (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). This led me to engage with two coach education managers and two HEi lecturers, who contributed to high performance coach education, however, were not involved with the BC or BJA UKCC CL4 award at the time of my PhD.

The significance of gatekeepers

Given my lack of familiarity with coaching in the UK, in the first instance, I drew on my relationship to Susan, a scUK coach education manager, responsible for the UKCC CL4 award across GBs and HEIs. When my relationship with Susan, who had held her role for several years at this time, started, we agreed on certain objectives. As an example, Susan arranged with her superiors that scUK would subsidise my PhD travels with £1,500 (£500 per academic year) and in return, I agreed to provide formal feedback to scUK in verbal or written form. Susan and I, however, developed an informal relationship that led us to meet regularly over the course of my research to discuss interim findings, to review developments and publications that related to the award. Susan left scUK in the spring of 2016 to pursue a new professional opportunity and although my working relationship with Susan ended at this time, it continued with scUK. George became my new contact at scUK, however, since he was new to the design, delivery, and management of the UKCC CL4 award, Michael, a fellow coach education manager at scUK, supported George's efforts. Without Susan, my relationship with scUK changed; I met less regularly with George and Michael until our interactions ceased in the first months of 2017, when scUK underwent a restructuring process that led to staff redundancies and the name change from *Sports Coach UK* to *UK Coaching*. Upon reflection, I recognise how truly important Susan was to establishing rapport with potential research partners. Susan secured an opportunity to introduce my study at the UKCC Coach Level 4 Conference in 2015 and facilitated the beginnings of my relationships with Nicole and Lisa, my gatekeepers on the BJA and BC UKCC CL4 award, respectively.

At the time of my study, Nicole was a senior academic at Sheffield Hallam University (SHU), which collaborated with the BJA on the establishment, implementation, and delivery of the BJA UKCC CL4 award. Nicole was responsible to communicate with BJA managers and educators as well as SHU lecturers about award related matters. Lisa, the BC Level 4 Programme Director, held the equivalent role in the context of the BC UKCC CL4 award, offered by BC in collaboration with University of Stirling (UoS). Contrary to Nicole, who took on the management of the BJA CL4 award as an academic staff member, Lisa was employed by BC. Nicole and Lisa represented crucial connections between the respective GB, the HEi, and those, who planned, delivered, and completed the award. Typical commitments included managing the development and on-going adjustment of award modules, scheduling of delivery and assessments dates, as well as recurrent communication with coaches. To coach learners and me, at the time of my research, they were the first to contact with questions that related to the UKCC CL4 award.

When establishing relationships with gatekeepers, who represent such crucial links in establishing rapport between researchers and researched, Bucerius (2013) noted that it could be ancillary for female researchers to collaborate with female gatekeepers. In the context of my study, I wish to consider this notion with care as I have developed diverse relationships with my three female gatekeepers Susan, Nicole and Lisa (Woodward, 2008). I considered it particularly challenging to engage with Nicole, whose lack of email responses prior to residential events of the BJA UKCC CL4 award disconcerted me. Often, I felt frustrated, because I did not know where my fieldwork would take place until the morning of the day I travelled to my next data collection site. It was common for me to contact BJA coach learners to gain this knowledge.

Nicole's lack of email engagement contrasted her friendly demeanour when we spoke face-to-face during residential events, which confused me throughout my fieldwork. By contrast, it was pleasant to rely on Susan and Lisa, with whom I enjoyed regular email and face-to-face communication. Similar to Bucerius (2013) in her reports of interactions with gatekeepers, I too, would argue that my trusting and stable relations with Susan and Lisa, helped me develop a sense of comfort when initiating dialogues with participants in my research field. As the majority of these coaches, coach educators, and managers were involved in the BJA and BC UKCC CL4 award, I will now refer to these in greater depth.

My research on the BJA UKCC CL4 award began in May 2015 with the first cohort of practitioners, who completed the award, offered by the BJA and SHU. The cohort I met at this time was in the latter half of their 24-month long CL4 journey, which led me to engage with a new cohort of coaches, who started the award in January 2016. Further to this, I engaged with coach educators and coach education managers, who contributed to residential events of the BJA UKCC CL4 award, which led me to interact with 33 individuals in this research environment (Table 3).

Table 3. Participants on the BJA UKCC CL4 award.

Participant group	Number of participants
Coaches (cohort 1 – start May 2015)	8
Coaches (cohort 2 – start January 2016)	13
Coach educators / HEi lecturers	10
Coach education managers	2
Total	33

Advertised as an opportunity to complete a PG Dip and Masters degree, the award was not exclusive to judo coaches. Among otherwise judo practitioners, I met one athletics coach in the first group and, I engaged with one fencing and one basketball practitioner in the second cohort of coach learners. Although all practitioners had several years of experiences as elite athletes, coaches, or both, only five were Great Britain high performance coaches at the time of my study. Others were employed or self-employed and experienced as club level coaches. They were accepted onto the

course based on sufficient evidence of prior learning (e.g. UKCC CL3 award, an undergraduate degree, extensive coaching experience).

Coach educators were largely HEi lecturers and most were full-time academic staff at SHU, with only few exceptions, such as two strength and conditioning coaches and one visiting speaker from British Sailing. The responsibility of coach educators was to deliver modules on topics that included physiology, psychology, biomechanics, nutrition, and professional development, as well as to assess students in formats that were benchmarked at postgraduate HE level 7. When conducting my fieldwork, it seemed to me as though the modules on the BJA UKCC CL4 award were aligned with the biophysical sciences.

The two coach education managers I met were Nicole, who was one of my gatekeepers and Jane, who was the BJA liaison officer. I only met Jane on two occasions, once when she reviewed a course module during a residential event and again when BJA coach learners attended oral examinations at the end of their CL4 studies. Nicole “checked in” with coaches on a few occasions over the course of my fieldwork, which I used as much as possible to interact with her due to our otherwise limited contact.

My fieldwork on the BC UKCC CL4 award, which was offered to practitioners in collaboration with UoS, began in May 2015 and encompassed my research with 20 coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers (Table 4).

Table 4. Participants on the BC UKCC CL4 award.

Participant group	Number of participants
Coaches (cohort 1 – start May 2015)	6
Coaches (cohort 2 – start prior to PhD)	5
Coach educators / HEi lecturers	7
Coach education managers	2
Total	20

The group of coaches, referred to here as cohort 1, represented practitioners, who started the BC UKCC CL4 award, during the first residential event that I engaged with in May 2015 (Table 4). Although I was in contact with several practitioners, who were further advanced in their award completion (Table 4 cohort 2), my engagement with them was intermittent and largely in interview conversations. Most interactions with coaches in the field of the BC UKCC CL4 award occurred with those, who started their learning journey when I began my fieldwork in May 2015. The BC CL4 award was exclusive to paddle sports coaches and open to international practitioners. Among the 11 coaches, I engaged with three American and eight British practitioners. While two British coaches were involved in coaching Talent Development and Elite level athletes, all coaches had numerous years of coaching experience and had gained the expertise

required for completion of the UKCC CL4 award (e.g. UKCC CL3 award, an undergraduate degree, extensive coaching experience).

Coach educators were BC staff, lecturers at UoS, and guest speakers from other HEIs.

Course content focused mostly on the social and cultural nuances of coaching and included themes, such as the coaching process, coaching philosophy, expertise, reflective practice and learning. Coaches, however, also completed modules on physiology, psychology, and biomechanics. Although the content was benchmarked at postgraduate HE level 7, I experienced the delivery and assessment on the BC UKCC CL4 award as centred on coaches' experiences as well as their professional and personal interests.

In addition to Lisa, the Level 4 Programme Director, I engaged with Harry, the BC Director of Coaching, whom I interviewed for the purpose of my research. Lisa was responsible for the organisation and management *in situ* of residential events. She was part of the British Canoeing Level 4 Board that met on a minimum of two occasions per year to discuss matters that related to the UKCC CL4 award. While other individuals could attend these meetings as per invitation, its core members were Lisa, Evelyn (lecturer at UoS) as well as Steve (BC staff at the time of my study and had completed the award in its pilot cohort). Finally, Bill, my DoS, attended board meetings as a core member, however, did not immerse himself in every residential event in the ways that Lisa, Evelyn, and Steve did as managers and educators. Certainly, his involvement in this group facilitated my access to the field of the BC UKCC CL4 award.

Managing the research field: My roles and responsibilities

Ethical considerations

It is imperative that I present ethical considerations, which I have regarded imbued in the various phases of my research (Kvale, 1996; Seale et al., 2004). In the first months of my doctoral study, I set out to confirm to Manchester Metropolitan University that I was adhering to procedural ethics identified in the university guidelines and regulations (Palmer, 2016). Following submission and revision of my application for ethical approval, a risk assessment form, informed consent forms and participant information sheets, the Ethics Review Board at Manchester Metropolitan University approved my proposed study. Since I envisaged to collaborate with organisations external to my home university, I sent said forms to Nicole and Lisa for further review by the BJA, SHU, by BC and UoS. Texts that discuss research design tend to end here with regard to ethics (e.g. Silverman, 2013), however, this was an understanding I did not see fit for the field-based nature of my research. Although these initial steps were significant milestones to commencing my fieldwork, I have regarded it my methodological responsibility to review the ethical implications of my actions throughout my study (Koro-Ljungberg, 2016; Northway, 2002).

In an attempt to consider emerging ethics, I created an awareness of my surroundings from the day I stepped into my research field by considering the purposes of the stakeholders I met. I reminded myself that I experienced situations that were otherwise exclusive to coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers, who engaged with the completion, facilitation, and organisation of the UKCC CL4 award. I sought my participants' written consent for study participation, the recording of data, and preferences in relation to the names I would use in outputs. Accordingly, I have

used pseudonyms to refer to the individuals I have engaged with over the course of my study. Only when participants gave written consent to the use of real names, I have done so. I added a footnote to make the reader aware of this approach in thesis chapter 1, where I began to use other people's names.

In consideration of "fieldwork ethics", I did not treat consent merely as a paperwork exercise. Rather, I reminded those I engaged with in the field that I would act upon the information they shared with me in consideration of their wishes (Atkinson and Delamont, 2010; Koro-Ljungberg, 2016). I recognised that stakeholders brought diverse understandings to our interactions and so, I was open about my own experiences as a former athlete, neophyte researcher, and non-native female living in the UK (Smith et al., 2014). I believe that this supported me in developing open relationships with coaches, educators, and managers, in which stakeholders trusted my ability to treat the matters we discussed confidentially.

I would suggest that their confidence became apparent when participants initiated private dialogues with me (Orb et al., 2001). I realised that my responses in these situations could affect my participants' thoughts and feelings (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004). To cope with this, I have been reflexive of my experiences, my beliefs and my presence in the research field. On some occasions, I audio-recorded thoughts on my way home from data collection sites. Other times, I imbued my written field notes with reflexive accounts of my views and emotions. This was significant to understanding and managing my "self", my interpretations, and my ethical relationships with gatekeepers and participants, which I assumed would develop over the course of my research (Ellis, 2004; Reinharz, 1997). My reflexive notes have represented an outlet to

manage ethical dilemmas, such as those, I felt when I sent interview transcripts to participants for review.

In my pursuit of openness and trust, I considered it important for my participants to revisit how I transformed audio recorded interview data into text (Ellis, 2004; Koro-Ljungberg, 2016). I felt torn, too, however, between my desire to be transparent and my aim to have the data available for further interpretation, which I perceived to be most potent to my interpretations. I commented:

I really hope Brooke does not cut out the things that make his interview stand out. I get it. He is working with renowned practitioners and he has had insight into all sorts of organisations. In particular, his recollections of the experiences he has had as a coach educator expose insightful tensions within and between national sporting organisations in the UK. (Reflexive notes written at home in November 2015)

In accordance with my expectations, Brooke asked me to remove several sections that exposed controversies in UK sporting organisations. Unsettled at the time, only few months later, my concerns eased when I recognised the rich amount of data I had available for further interpretation. This led to a new dilemma that concerned my aim to present rich accounts, which meant to me that I would draw on evocative and engaging data. I felt guilty for prioritising comments, which I believed would strengthen my arguments. I noted:

Some interview content is just more appealing. Everything is relevant to some extent, but some data is more potent. Part of me thinks that I must give those a voice, who want “to be heard”. I hope that their data fits with my aim to create rich accounts of my research experiences. I am thinking of those, who wish their real names to be associated with their views. I feel as though my thesis is a vessel to voice their frustrations, so I am aware of my responsibility. Equally, I understand that I cannot draw on all interview data. In fact, I have to be brutal with my rich data set and prioritise what I feel will strengthen my writing. (Reflexive notes written at home in May 2017)

As Hammersley and Traianou (2012) suggested, I viewed it my responsibility to draw on data that would allow me to portray in-depth understandings gained in the research field. I realised in my reading, interpreting, and presenting of data that I was drawing on my researcher voice as ‘...the manifestation of author’s [my] will, intent, and feeling’ when prioritising evocative accounts (Charmaz and Mitchell Jr., 1997:193). While I suggest that I lend a voice to those participants, whose data I presented, I believe that I had the privilege also to voice my own beliefs, feelings and interpretations in this process (Martin-Alcoff, 2009). The politics of voice and whom I should privilege and quieten, is an interesting and perplexing issue. Research and the foregrounding of data is not democratic despite our best intentions. Over the course of my research, I evolved my voice and opinions particularly through reflexivity, which I regarded significant when contemplating, understanding, and critically evaluating my decisions.

Further to this, reflexivity has represented my way of “being ethical with myself”. At times, it was discomfoting to confront myself with the multiple meanings and interpretations that I explored in my reflexive accounts (Pillow, 2003). As portrayed in thesis chapter 1, I struggled with the unpredictable nature of my fieldwork. While I felt apprehensive when writing reflexive accounts at the start of my research, as these seemed to reinforce my “messy” experiences, they led me to revisit also my inner turmoil of self and belonging. With my ongoing commitment to keeping reflexive notes, I began to, and to date do, consider reflexivity a cathartic process that has been significant to my acceptance of the irregular and discomfoting realities of my work (Ellis, 2004).

“Finding my feet – still skating on thin ice”

At the outset of my fieldwork, the thought of familiarising myself with those, who were at the centre of my study, appealed to my interest in people and their interactions. I was determined to negotiate reciprocity with my participants in our first encounters, yet equally, on the first days in my research field, I was conscious that I was stepping into new and, most of all, unknown terrain (Subedi, 2006). I felt inferior to my participants, all knowledgeable practitioners, familiar with British sport, while I joined “from the outside” as a female and an inexperienced non-native researcher (Finlay, 2002). My longitudinal fieldwork and implicit opportunities to engage with my research field recurrently were key to developing comfort and calm during this time (Thomson and Holland, 2003). Despite my ongoing uncertainty with regard to what constituted “successful” research, the environments of the BC and BJA UKCC CL4 award eventually became familiar surroundings (Herman, 2010). I commented:

I was fraught with uncertainty when I stepped into the classrooms on my first day of data collection. I felt intimidated, knowing that the coaches would watch my every step because they had never seen me before. My surroundings seemed so daunting that I sought comfort in knowing that among the male coaches, there was one female coach on the British Canoeing CL4 award and three female coaches in the British Judo equivalent. I thought to myself, “If they seem content, I hope to feel like this one day when I know coaches better.” And I did. I must admit though that I used the fact that I am female, inexperienced in qualitative research, foreign, and a former figure skater in my interactions with male participants. I ensured that I explained to all my participants where I was from and what I did. Part of me feels guilty when I listen to my favourite feminist podcast that supports me in establishing myself as confident female, who does not buy into societal norms that relate to women as the “weaker” ones. However, I overcome those moments of guilt, because I am convinced that this openness about my background was supportive at the start of my fieldwork in particular to reinforce my image as a researcher, who did not engage with coaches to test or judge them, but whose sole purpose it was to complete her PhD study. (Reflexive notes written in my office in December 2017)

As suggested earlier in this chapter, it was important to me to demonstrate transparency about my purpose in the research field to develop trusting rapport with participants (McCall, 2006). I believe that my awareness of, what Sherif (2001:437) considered, ‘...the constant shifting of boundaries between people...’ evolved into an ongoing consideration over the course of my study. I was considerate of my membership in environments of the UKCC CL4 award, which I understood to be a common thought to researchers, who immersed themselves in their field of study (Adler and Adler, 1987; McCall, 2006).

During timetabled delivery on residential events of the UKCC CL4 award, I would have best described myself as a peripheral member because I sought to gain ‘...an insider’s perspective of the people, activities, and the structure of the social world...’, while adopting the role of a silent observer (Adler and Adler, 1987:37). In these situations, I refrained from engaging in core activities, such as attention to taught content or engagement with questions or discussions. This contrasted my active membership between timetabled sessions during residential events on the BC and BJA CL4 award, when I engaged naturally with coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers over cups of coffee and restaurant meals (Adler and Adler, 1987). After my first visits in the research field, it seemed as though coaches in particular, did not only invite me, but expected me to join their leisurely interactions during residential events. This led me to feel as an integral part of their CL4 communities. My open relationships with coaches, educators, and managers also led me to be mindful that my fieldwork would finish at one point. In the latter six months in the field, I ensured to explain with which residential event my research would end. On my final days on the BC and BJA UKCC CL4 award, I spoke to practitioners as a group and thanked Nicole and Lisa for

their support. I also sought consent from participants for potential further contact, because I was keen for our communicative channels to remain open for potential future research.

Overall, I have come to recognise a transcendent perspective in my roles, which I believe, allowed me to study the behaviours of coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers, as well as ‘...the subjective, meaningful aspect[s]...’ that I defined from my experiences with them (McCall, 2006:7). I considered myself a “bricoleur” when engaging *with* and *in* the research field because I adopted different roles and methods to adapt ‘...to what is [was] available in the context, and what the researcher [I] can do in that setting’ (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008:5). Sometimes, I was observant, other times, interactive, however, throughout, I have been reflexive in the observations, naturally occurring conversations, and interviews that I conducted.

Data collection

Participant observations and naturally occurring conversations

Participant observation has been recognised as an integral component of ethnographic research (e.g. Angrosino and Mays de Pérez, 2000; Atkinson, 2017; Denzin and Lincoln, 2008; Wolcott, 1995; 2008). Emerson et al. (2001:353) suggested that researchers observe “subjects” in ‘...natural setting[s] on a relatively long-term basis in order to investigate, experience and represent the social life and social processes...’. As aforementioned, the overarching aim for ethnographers in the nineteenth and twentieth century was to present the situations under study in ways that portrayed the “natural” ways of life as closely as possible (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Researchers strived to deliver accurate illustrations of studied processes, aiming to avoid “observer bias” by silencing their beliefs (Emerson et al., 2001).

In contemporary sociological studies, greater acceptance and interest exist in the views of ethnographers when participating in their research field (Wolcott, 2008). Increasingly, they are regarded as members of the study environments, while the researched are perceived to collaborate “in the field” (Adler and Adler, 1987; Angrosino and Mays de Pérez, 2000; Emmerson et al., 2001). Instead of viewing researchers either as outsiders or insiders, it has become more common to view the lines of their roles to blur and shift throughout the research process (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009; Sherif, 2001). I believe this interest in studying ‘...the ways in which ethnographic observers interact with or enter into a dialogic relationship with members...’ has been enriching of participant observation as a research method (Angrosino and Mays de Pérez, 2000:678).

For the purpose of my PhD, I conducted approximately 250 hours of fieldwork with coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers, during which time I engaged with participants in observations and naturally occurring conversations.

Of these, 110 hours of fieldwork took place during residential events of the BC UKCC CL4 award and 110 hours in the BJA equivalent. Days of residential events typically started at 9:00 am and ended at 6:00 pm, while my informal dialogues with coaches, educators, and managers continued during breakfast, dinner meals, and between taught sessions.

Further to this, I was invited to observe the oral examinations that practitioners took to complete the BJA UKCC CL4 award as well as one BC Level 4 Board meeting. This encompassed ten fieldwork hours.

Finally, I visited practitioners, who completed the award at the time of my research, in their day-to-day coaching environments, which amounted to 20 hours fieldwork. While my initial aim was to conduct ten such visits, when I had completed six months of my fieldwork, I recognised that my funds would not suffice to do so. At the time, I had visited three coaches in their practitioner environments, one in London, one in Sheffield, and one in Kendal. Further seven journeys would have taken me to various places in the UK, often requiring overnight accommodation, which I was unable to afford as a self-funded PhD student. The £1,500 that I received from scUK over three years did not take me so far.

Overall, it was my desire to ‘...firsthand experience...’ how coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers acted and interacted in UKCC CL4 environments to understand in greater depth the perceptions, opinions, and meanings associated with

high performance coach education and learning (Wolcott, 2008:49). As suggested in the previous section, I assumed the role of a peripheral-member researcher during taught sessions on the UKCC CL4 award (Adler and Adler, 1987). Typical activities included educator-led delivery to coach learners, group discussions, but also practical sessions, such as tasks completed in biomechanics labs on the BJA and “on the water” in kayaks and canoes on the BC CL4 award. During coaching practice observations of coaches with groups of athletes, I was observant and quiet too, as I attempted to distinguish considerations that were discussed on the CL4 award. I was keen to gain insight into these mundane realities to develop in-depth understandings of the contexts that shape coach learning on the UKCC CL4 award (Mulhall, 2003).

Between taught sessions, I became an active-member researcher when I interacted freely with coaches, educators and managers (Adler and Adler, 1987). Our conversations related to a variety of topics, including course content and assessments, current matters in sport and coaching, but also private issues, such as family-related developments and other day-to-day responsibilities. I aimed to establish a balance ‘...between “going out to places” and “coming back with information”...’ when I spent time in the research field (Wolcott, 1995:95). To this end, I reminded myself of the questions I aimed to answer and kept descriptive field notes and reflexive comments throughout my PhD.

Field notes

Throughout my fieldwork, I kept written notes to capture the things I observed with my “eyes and ears” (Wolcott, 1995; 2008). These field notes represent a way to translate observed events, people, and surroundings into written accounts (Emerson et al., 2001). Field notes are viewed as an integral component of ethnographic research. For instance, Atkinson (1992:5) suggested that ethnography was characterised by the producing and reproducing of text, a process that would begin with the regular keeping of notes, written in relation to ‘...observations and reflections concerning “the field”’.

Researchers tend to be selective with regard to what they capture and leave out in their notes (Wolcott, 2008). Instead of desiring to mirror situations in detail, the focus is on taking note of observations that are perceived of importance to the study and its objectives (Emerson et al., 2001). While this would lead to some descriptions, it does not imply a view of field notes as mere recordings of “evidence” (Emmerson et al., 1995). Rather, descriptive comments reflect researcher aims, purposes and encompass ‘...active processes of interpretation and sense-making’ (Emerson et al., 2001:353). For the purpose of my study, I distanced myself from seeking to produce “accurate” accounts of my research environments, which is why I complemented my descriptive comments with reflexive remarks (Sparkes and Smith, 2014). I recorded these in 200 pages of hand-written notes, which I keep in two A4 hardbound notebooks. I recognised a practicality in capturing my thoughts in this way, which was particularly useful when I stood or sat without desk at the side of a training ground or a laboratory (Wolcott, 2008).

At the start of every taught session on the BJA and BC UKCC CL4 award, I wrote down who was in the room and drew an image of where coaches, tutors, and I had positioned ourselves. I ensured to note the theme of the respective session and pseudonym of the tutor, which I perceived useful whenever I revisited my notes and “relived” my experiences. During observations of such sessions, I was descriptive about the content that was discussed and I paid attention to what coaches did during this time. For instance, I documented who used a laptop, who followed the delivery, and who posed questions during sessions. This was important to help me distinguish educator-led periods from one-to-one interactions and group discussions. I was particularly keen to reflect in my written accounts whether coach learners contributed to set tasks, what their contributions were, and how conversations evolved. I adopted a similar approach during coaching practice observations, where I desired to document how coaches acted, whether, and if so, how they embedded understandings gained from the UKCC CL4 award. It was challenging to identify what I sought to explore and led me to interview practitioners about what, how, and why they did and did not embed CL4 insights in their coaching.

During coffee breaks and meal times, my observations were less structured (Sherif, 2001). My priority was to “mingle” with coaches and, if present, educators and managers. I aimed to “be there”, for instance sipping my cup of coffee and socialising with participants (Wolcott, 1995). In these situations, it was common for educators to ask me how I felt coach learners perceived the taught content and for learners to share how they perceived the respective residential delivery. During longer pauses between sessions, our conversations were more private. In these naturally occurring conversations, my priority was to interact with coaches, educators, and managers, who

seemed relaxed and, I felt, shared personal stories, thoughts, and feelings freely (Atkinson and Silverman, 1997). My notebook remained in my bag during these times, as I sought to “make the most” of mixing with those I studied (Fine, 2010). Later in the day, I would take notes, if I wished to document things that stood out to me during breaks. Early in my fieldwork, I wrote:

Sometimes, it is difficult to write down everything I discussed in a coffee or lunch break. My brain fires so many thoughts at my hand, but my hand can only write at a certain speed. Similarly, I just believe it is much more important to go with the flow of conversations than speaking to coaches with my notebook and taking notes while we chat. If I were a coach, I would feel my words were scrutinised to some extent. I imagine it would make me feel a little awkward. I have no idea whether this is something I am supposed to do or not and it is quite challenging to remember who said what, but I am just going to trust myself on this approach. So far, everyone seems to enjoy the conversations we have between taught sessions. (Reflexive notes written at home in May 2015)

Throughout this process, I was reflexive and so, my written notes are interweaved with impromptu questions and thoughts (Ellis, 2004; Finlay, 2002). Often, these sections would comprise of phrases that begin with “*I wonder what this means...*” or “*I have to speak to ... about ...*”. On rare occasions, I audio-recorded my reflexive commentary, which was a format I used, when I travelled by car and began my journey home shortly following an experience that I wished to revisit.

My reflexive notes were significant to implementing and locating myself as an active agent when engaging with coaches, coach educators, coach education managers in the research field (Angrosino and Mays de Pérez, 2000; Ellis, 2004; Hertz, 1997).

Reflexive writing supported me to cope with the lack of clarity in the methodological literature on a “right way” of conducting ethnographic studies (Higginbottom, 2004; Lumsden, 2009). In recurrent reflexive notes, I prompted myself to unpack how my interpretations fit with past and present experiences, which is why I suggest that I have

studied my own values and beliefs while immersing myself in environments of the UKCC CL4 award (Fine, 2010; Sherif, 2001). My preparedness and comfort to disclose personal thoughts and feelings have evolved over time. In the first months of my fieldwork, I was anxious to expose my personal thoughts, because I felt they would become “more real”, once I put pen to paper. I recalled my thoughts as follows:

I thought I understood what it meant to be reflexive, but I was not prepared to unpack my thoughts. All I ever wanted was to fit in, so why would I now focus on experiences that distinguished me from other people, who did not grow up with an early commitment to a sport, like mine? I felt embarrassed. I assumed I would criticise my parents, if I spoke about pressure, perfection, and success. This thought broke my heart as they supported me in so many ways. I was nervous to send my positional chapter to my supervisors earlier today. It was different with Bill. I crossed this bridge a while ago and feel ok knowing that he has seen glimpses of me that I am not proud of, things that I try not to disclose. (Reflexive notes written in my office in January 2018)

In retrospect, I believe that my reflexive notes have represented outlets to unpack my questions of identity and belonging (Day, 2012). While I recognise that these accounts often do not relate to participant perceptions, they have helped me unfold and interpret my research experiences (DeVault, 1997; Subedi, 2006; Wolcott, 1995).

Semi-structured interviews

In addition to the observations I completed in UKCC CL4 environments, I invited coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers to articulate their views in interviews, which represent a further typical format of data collection in ethnographic studies (Wolcott, 2008). Gubrium and Holstein (2003:21) suggested that ‘...at the first glance, the interview seems simple and self-evident’. At an agreed time and location, the interviewer poses a set of questions, to which the respondent offers information. In this “traditional view” of interviewing, the researcher would draw on predetermined questions with little flexibility, as questions would be asked in the same order during every interview and with every participant (Edwards and Holand, 2013; Purdy, 2014). Similar to the interest in perspectives that ethnographers hold as members of their research environments, however, our understandings of interview conduct have moved beyond this simplistic view (Gubrium and Holstein, 2003).

Qualitative researchers in particular, tend to consider interviews social situations, during which researcher and respondent engage in a collaborative process of meaning-creation (Talmage, 2012; Warren, 2012). The respondent can decide which information they wish to share, how and to which extent they are prepared to do so. In doing so, the interviewee ‘...mediates and alters knowledge...’ conveyed to the researcher (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995:10). The researcher could be viewed as an ‘...active listener and collaborating participant...’ who interprets responses *in situ* and seeks further depth where considered useful to enrich existing insights (Talmage, 2012:296). The extent to which the interviewer wishes to act upon the interviewee’s suggestions depends on the interview format, chosen for the purpose of their research.

Often associated with qualitative research, thus, termed qualitative interviewing, researchers would engage in semi-structured or unstructured interview formats, which render flexibility to the ways in which interview partners interact (Edwards and Holland, 2013; Kvale 2007; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; Warren, 2001). For a semi-structured interview, the researcher prepares a series of questions or themes they wish to explore, while maintaining flexibility in terms of the order in which these are discussed. Opportunities remain to adapt questions according to interviewee comments (Gubrium and Holstein, 2003). During an unstructured interview, the researcher also considers the research aims; however, allows the participant to speak freely about their views and opinions (Edwards and Holland, 2013). The value of semi-structured and unstructured interviews lies in an understanding of interview partners as feeling and thinking individuals, who converse with one other to make sense of personal experiences without needing to adhere to strict schedules (Silverman, 2013; Talmage, 2012).

For the purpose of my study, I conducted semi-structured interviews with coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers, which I considered opportunities of social interactions that enabled me to gain insight into the views that my participants perceived meaningful (Atkinson, 2016; Stephens, 2010). I recognised myself as ‘...actively and unavoidably engaged in the interactional co-construction...’ of interview situations (Gubrium and Holstein, 2003:33). I prioritised this format over an unstructured interview approach, because I desired to explore how different stakeholders thought and felt about the UKCC CL4 award (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996; Wolcott, 2008).

To facilitate the interview process, I drew on interview guides, which I generated in line with my research questions and dialogues with my supervisors (Appendix 5 and 6). Informed by my reading of Kvale (2007) on conducting interviews, I suggest that my interview guides gave me direction over the course of conversations with participants. They comprised of a series of questions, which I did not discuss in one set way with all participants. Rather, the thought of being able to draw on my interview guide, if I wished to do so, instilled me with confidence as a neophyte researcher. Interviews began with conversations about participants' experiences, roles and responsibilities. I started by inviting interviewees, *"Tell me about yourself."* (Appendix 5). Usually, this led naturally to education, a theme that I pursued further in relation to high performance coach education and learning. I was particularly interested in the perceptions of coaches, coach educators and coach education managers in relation to their experiences with the UKCC CL4 award, their perceptions of value and impact. I asked questions, such as *"Tell me more about your perceptions of the UKCC CL4 in particular."*, *"Tell me about your perceived impact of the UKCC CL4 programme."*, *"Tell me more about what (and how) you value the UKCC CL4."* (Appendix 5). I was keen to explore how my participants perceived the topics discussed on a personal level, but also in the context of their imminent (e.g. everyday coaching practice) and extensive professional environments (e.g. sports coaching as a profession). Whenever I aimed to gain further in-depth insights into participant opinions, I prompted interviewees with questions, such as *"Can you tell me a little bit more about this?"*, *"What do think about this?"*, *"How did this make you feel?"* (Tracy, 2013) (Appendix 5).

Given the bricolage of research methods that I adopted, I assumed that the participant sampling for semi-structured interviews needed to occur separate from my fieldwork during residential events (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). To this end, my recruitment of interview participants began during the UKCC Coach Level 4 Conference in 2015, over the course of which I was opportunistic in my approach to delegates, knowing that most attendees could relate to the UKCC CL4 award (Tracy, 2013). I recruited five participants, whom I interviewed in the piloting phase of my study, during which I aimed to refine the interview guide I had created (Marshall and Rossman, 2010). Since I immersed myself in residential events of the BC and BJA UKCC CL4 award, breaks and evenings were important occasions to invite stakeholders to interviews. Often, I voiced my intentions during these times, gathered contact details, and reached out to coaches, coach educators and coach education managers via email following these events (Wolcott, 1995). I was purposive and, to some extent, utilitarian in extending interview invitations to participants. My persistence when contacting individuals ranged subject to the significance and richness of data that I anticipated. For instance, I was more persistent in my recurrent contact of coach education managers compared to coaches, because the number of managers involved with the UKCC CL4 award was much lower than that of practitioners.

Altogether, 38 of my 60 participants engaged in semi-structured interviews. Whenever time and everyday commitments allowed, I spoke to participants on two occasions, thus in total, I conducted 51 interviews with 38 participants, which occurred in addition to my immersion in UKCC CL4 related events (Table 5).

Table 5. Semi-structured interviews.

Group of participants	Number of interviews
Coaches	32
Coach educators / HEi lecturers	7
Coach education managers	12
Total	51

Although it was my intention to conduct face-to-face interviews, only ten of 51 interviews took place in this format. As a self-funded PhD student, I was unable to finance long distance journeys to coaches, coach educators, and managers, which led me to invite them to telephone and Skype interviews (Atkinson, 2016; Stephens, 2010). I did consider conducting interviews between taught sessions during residential UKCC CL4 events, however, refrained from addressing this with participants when I recognised how long and demanding these days were. Except from one coach, who preferred to speak to me on the phone, all other participants welcomed the opportunity to engage in Skype video calls that led to comfortable and engaging conversations. With participants' consent, I audio-recorded interviews for further analysis and interpretation (Warren, 2012).

I interviewed ten coaches on two occasions, in the second of which we focused on whether and if so, what, how and why they implemented selected insights gained from the UKCC CL4 award in coaching practice (Appendix 6). I asked questions, such as, *"What impact do you perceive the CL4 award has had on you?"*, *"Have you attempted to implement any content from the CL4 award into your professional and personal life?"*, *"Has any element of the L4 course helped secure or added confirmation to your*

existing practice?”. To gain in-depth insights into the perspectives of coaches, I posed prompting questions, such as *“Can you give me an example?”*, *“How did this make you feel?”*, *“Why do you think this way?”* (Appendix 6).

Further to this, three coach education managers sought to enrich content discussed in initial conversations, to which end I conducted a second interview with each of them too. Although I was aware of saturation, which Merriam and Tisdell (2015) described as the point at which participant suggestions appear to generate limited “new” knowledge, the end of my interview engagement coincided with my final days in the research field. At this time, I felt as though I had gained in-depth understandings of the realities of the UKCC CL4 award, the experiences and perceptions of coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers.

When I engaged in fieldwork, I was iterative in my engagement with the field of the UKCC CL4 award, my recruitment of stakeholders for the purpose of interviews, my interview conversations with participants and my revisiting and transcription of audio-recordings (Basil, 2003; Roulston, 2010). During this PhD phase, I felt as though I was working on so many responsibilities that I believed I had lost an overview of what I was really accomplishing. While I perceived the transcription of interviews a particularly tedious and slow process, eventually, I recognised its value. I wrote:

I spoke to my office mate today and we were chatting about my interview transcripts and as I summarised what one coach told me, I could actually remember the face of that person, their voice, the environment I was in when I spoke to them about that particular topic ... it suddenly made realise why I am doing it all myself. I feel I know the people I study. They're not just numbers to me. I like it. (Reflexive notes written at Manchester Metropolitan University Crewe campus in March 2016)

During interview transcription, I was opposed to positivist notions, such as those set forth by Schegloff (1997), who referred to it as a means to duplicate audio-recorded material in writing. Similar to Poland (1995:292), I considered it problematic to strive for transcription accuracy in light of ‘...the inter-subjective nature of human communication...’. Comparably, Denzin (1995) and Lapadat (2000) opposed the prescription of one way of interview transcription to different research formats. Although I endeavoured to transcribe audio-recorded material as closely as possible, I recognise that this did not occur verbatim. Rather, I viewed myself to be actively involved, continuously interpreting and contextualising participant suggestions with my own research experiences and contemplations (Bucholtz, 2000; McLellan et al., 2003).

Data analysis, interpretation and write-up

Managing my large data set

When I set out to seek guidance in the methodological literature as to how to best organise my data, I understood suggestions by authors such as Guest et al. (2012) and Saldaña (2015) that pointed towards stepwise data analysis. Informed by my reading of Hammersley (2012), Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), and Wolcott (2008), however, I regarded an iterative approach to fieldwork, analysis, interpretation, and write up most suitable for my ethnographically inspired research. Particularly the interweaving of data analysis with interpretive decisions was considered inevitable in field-based studies since our interpretations were said to begin with the immersion in research environments (Savin-Baden, 2004). In line with DeVault (1997), I recognised significance in gathering, interpreting, and presenting data in connection to personal narratives, which led me to imbue data organisation with taking note of preliminary interpretations. As Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) suggested, I worked “back and forth” between my data, field notes and interim interpretations.

This process involved emic readings of my data, as I sought to interpret the social world in light of participants’ and my own perceptions, however also, etic readings when I drew on symbolic interactionist concepts to make sense of these experiences (Given, 2008; Wolcott, 2008). The research aims and questions of my study aided my efforts when I sifted through field notes and interview transcripts to identify meaningful suggestions. This formed part of my emic readings. In my etic readings, I then gave consideration towards how symbolic interactionist theorising could support me in making sense of my research findings.

Deeply immersed in my reading, organisation, and interpretation of data, I wrote:

When I look at the Word documents that gradually fill with data, notes, themes, sub-themes and so on, I am in disbelief that I did all of this. The challenge is that it is not a linearly progressive exercise. The more interview transcripts I read the more nuances I see in terms of potential sub-themes. Sometimes, I think I have a bigger theme, but then I read a few more transcripts and I have to rethink my decision and potentially create a new theme that I link to various data extracts. It is messy. With 51 transcripts and two books of research notes it does seem endless at the moment. I wonder how many pages I will end up with when I have read all this material. I have so much information to play with. (Reflexive notes written at home in May 2017)

In this connection, I wish to refer to the process by which I managed my data. Since I was keen to be ‘...sensitive to context, reflexive...’ throughout my research, I offered all participants to review interview transcripts before I used them for further analysis and interpretation (Lapadat, 2001:210). Then, I immersed myself in recurrent readings of transcripts to define so-called codes, which in my study, constituted of links between data, ideas, and interpretations (Basić, 2003). Saldaña (2015:3) suggested that codes could be considered ‘...summative, salient, essence-capturing and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based...’ suggestions. In light of this view, I identified single words and short phrases, which I hoped to facilitate my creation of rich accounts of the opinions of those, who engaged with the UKCC CL4 award (Emerson et al., 2001; Berg, 2009). Here, I balanced my desire to highlight the varied ideas of coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers, while acknowledging seemingly mundane observations, which, I suggest, allowed me to contextualise my interpretations (Wolcott, 2008).

Opposed to a linear approach to analysis and interpretation, parallel to my reading of data, I contemplated themes, which I regarded as wider units that supported the development of patterns (Braun et al., 2016). Hammersley and Atkinson (2007)

perceived a thematic arrangement useful to this process of analysis and interpretation in ethnographic research. The authors highlighted, however, that this process was ‘...more like finding one’s way through, or creating a path that leads, to a worthwhile destination...’ than following a predetermined pattern (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:194). I felt supported by my supervisors, who challenged my thoughts and encouraged reflections on the different avenues I could pursue in my interpretations. I believe that this was significant to aid my iterative approach to revisiting data and regrouping the meanings I defined in accordance with my evolving thoughts and interpretations.

My comfort with this process was integral to coping with the “messiness” that I recognised when I began to organise my field notes. Although I knew all along that my comments were embedded firmly with my thinking, it was at this point that I reminded myself that my observations were shaped by my values, beliefs and experiences (Adler and Adler, 1987). I struggled to pursue a process, similar to my organisation of interview data in codes and themes. My reading of methodological texts, such as Atkinson (2017) and Wolcott (1995; 2008), prompted me to draw on field notes selectively in my thesis, where I considered they would enrich my arguments. From an analytic perspective, I immersed myself in my field notes and labelled sections I wished to revisit, from the day that I commenced my data organisation until the final phases of thesis write-up.

Parallel to theme generation, I read theoretical texts to deepen my understandings of symbolic interactionist writing that I might consider in a theoretical interpretation of my findings.

Theoretical framework: My interpretation of symbolic interactionist work

Despite the parallel theme generation and reading of symbolic interactionist texts, I sought to create an understanding of the “bigger picture” of my data before making sense of my findings with this theoretical lens in mind (Wolcott, 2008). I adopted a somewhat stepwise approach in the sense that I generated initial themes for all interview transcripts and only then, I introduced theory to define more abstract interpretations. At this point, as suggested by Kvale (2007:117), I read my data ‘...again and again, reflect [reflected] theoretically on specific themes of interest, write [wrote] out interpretation[s]...’. Upon reflection, I would describe this process as a “gradual crafting” of my findings and their theoretical discussions. In the earlier stages of this process, however, I perceived it challenging to marry the practitioner environments of my research with symbolic interactionist texts. Often, I wished for specific instructions to follow in my interpretations:

My supervisors say I should just keep on doing what I am doing and then at a later stage I will see which theories I will use. This is driving me nuts! I really want to give my methodology chapter a go, but I have little to write about in my data analysis, interpretation and write up section. I will have to wait until I have read more symbolic interactionist work. This is frustrating. It makes me panic. Knowing, I will be teaching full time from September, I am feeling anxious to sit at my desk and start writing a methodology draft. At one point, I will just have to leave one section with limited detail until I have made further interpretive decisions. It just makes me doubt my abilities to complete my thesis on time. (Reflexive notes written at home in June 2016)

At the start of my PhD, my supervisors and I discussed a variety of avenues, including an evaluative study, post-structuralist and interpretivist interpretations of the UKCC CL4 award. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, I felt most drawn to interpretivism, because I saw an alignment with my view of the world as ever changing and shaped by the different realities we experience as individuals. This symbolic

character of individual and social processes was what I could relate also to my research questions. For instance, I believed that stakeholders would define different symbolic meanings of the nature, the value, the impact, and their experiences with the UKCC CL4 award, which extended beyond the information available in the course specifications. Similar to my adoption of more than one research method, I considered myself again a “bricoleur” when I read symbolic interactionist work, written at various moments in its development (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). In chronological order, I will introduce key tenets that I drew upon for the purpose of a theoretical interpretation of my research insights.

I read, and re-read, three major works. Charles H. Cooley’s *Human nature and the social order* (Cooley, 1902), *Social organization: A study of the larger mind* (Cooley, 1910) and *Social process* (Cooley, 1918). Although challenging to understand these early texts, it was useful to draw on the looking glass self to make sense of different ways in which encounters in different settings within and outside the UKCC CL4 award shaped coaches’ self-understandings. This was particularly beneficial to interpret the perceived impact that the learning on the UKCC CL4 award had on practitioner lives. In relation to this, I leaned on Cooley’s (1902) power of milieu to better understand the opportunities and constraints that coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers identified when hoping to create impact in coaching environments. I drew on further suggestions by Cooley to emphasise the importance of trusting relationships among stakeholders, who were involved in the award to cope with the barriers they encountered in professional and personal environments (Cooley, 1910).

For further theoretical interpretation, I read *Mind, Self & Society* by George H. Mead (Mead, 1934). Above all, I leaned on Mead’s notion of “self” to shed light on the

various ways in which coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers valued the UKCC CL4 award in their personal and professional lives. Mead assumed that “self” comprised of “I”, the act of an individual in a particular situation, and “me”, the anticipation of upcoming and awareness of previous situations. I drew upon the generalised other, as our embedded assumptions, to demonstrate how the opinions that others shared with respect to coaching as a full-time occupation affected my participants’ sense of self (Mead, 1934).

Moreover, I drew on Herbert Blumer’s text *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method* to emphasise that the actions of coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers were informed by the meanings they defined in different situations (Blumer, 1969). I assumed that these meanings evolved from interpersonal encounters as well as self-interactions, which would lead to the creation of new and alteration of previously defined meanings. Nevertheless, I recognised that Blumer’s symbolic interactionist contributions to sociological thought extended beyond the basic premises. For this reason, I immersed myself in further texts, including *The Field of Collective Behavior* (Blumer, 1946) and *Society as Symbolic Interaction* (Blumer, 1966). I drew on the author’s interpretation of “joint acts” to make sense of the collaborative efforts I experienced in environments of the BJA and BC UKCC CL4 award. In relation to this, I raised that it was important for stakeholders to work *with* and *alongside* each other in so-called acting units that pursued shared goals and objectives. I read Anselm Strauss’ work, which made me feel enthusiastic, when I swiftly progressed through his 1959 text *Mirrors & Masks – The search for identity*. I noted:

I am excited I found this text. I am actually enjoying it. Mead was a drag. I had to use the dictionary so many times when I read it, as some of his suggestions seemed so far removed from my English, even my academic understandings.

Strauss' book is easy to read in comparison to that. I can relate to the writing, which is refreshing. (Reflexive notes written at home in June 2017)

Strauss' work resonated with my thinking because of the author's appreciation of the ever changing and evolving nature of adult life. I drew on my understandings of status as the social positions of individuals and status passage in the context of professional progression. I related the notion of subworlds to my understandings of GBs and HEIs as environments with distinct routines and assumptions (Shibutani, 1955; Strauss, 1978). These, I would argue were brought together in a new social world where professionals with diverse backgrounds were envisaged to collaborate for the purpose of the UKCC CL4 award (Shibutani, 1955; Strauss, 1978). Here, I considered the importance of HEI lecturers and coach educators in supporting coach learners in the educational settings of the UKCC CL4 award (Strauss, 1959).

As will become apparent in Chapter 5, I drew on selected understandings from more modern texts, such as Fine (1979), Fine and Kleinman (1979), Holstein and Gubrium (2000), and Mezirow (1997) for further theoretical interpretation. This was particularly useful to emphasise the multidimensional nature of the twenty-first century environments in which the UKCC CL4 award was set. As an example, I considered my reading of Holstein and Gubrium (2000) valuable to demonstrate that the social surroundings of coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers were not only complex and dynamic, but that they shaped which understandings of "self" my participants shared with others. Further to this, selected conclusions by Mezirow (1997), whose work Nelson et al. (2016) viewed to share the fluid understandings of social life that Blumer proposed, were useful to interpreting the experiences of those practitioners, who perceived their learning journeys as a process of transformation.

In addition, I used the concept of culture as ‘...a set of shared understandings...’ which Fine (1979:733) defined to be implicit in Blumer’s writing. I assumed that cultures comprised of the interactions between individuals as well as the themes discussed and meanings defined in these encounters. I drew on Fine’s notion of subcultures as the multiple social settings, in which coaches, educators, and managers engaged, and between which they translated cultural understandings. One such example would be the environments of the UKCC CL4 award and situations of day-to-day coaching practice.

I recognise that some may contend my use of texts from different phases of symbolic interactionism. I believe that it was necessary to draw on a bricolage of symbolic interactionist work to make sense of my heterogeneous research experiences in different situations of the UKCC CL4 award.

Research quality

Recognition of the often-flexible and iterative nature of qualitative studies, led authors to view discordancy of this work with rigorous research criteria developed for the natural sciences (e.g. Anney, 2014; Cho and Trent, 2006; Lincoln, 1995; Seale, 2010; Williams, 2000). Early contributions from Guba and Lincoln (1989), Lincoln and Guba (1985), and later developments by Tracy (2010) contributed to a distancing from scientific research criteria by delivering alternatives to objectivity, reliability, generalisability, and validity. In, what Burke (2016) defined, a “criteriological approach”, Guba and Lincoln (1989) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) set forth credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as four parallel criteria to established scientific equivalents. Lincoln (1995) argued that the aim was to support researchers in their pursuit of trustworthiness in qualitative studies. Measures to meet said criteria would include triangulation of data, transfer of research findings into other contexts, thorough documentation of decisions, and tracking of data sources and interpretations (Guba and Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In a similar vein, Tracy proposed ‘...a set of universal criteria for qualitative inquiry that still attends to the complexity of the qualitative landscape...’ (Tracy, 2010:839). Tracy argued that qualitative studies would demonstrate quality, if they met eight criteria, including worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethics, and meaningful coherence.

For the purpose of my research, however, my thinking was in line with more current authors, who highlighted that the universal criteria for qualitative studies were unsuitable when adopting interpretive research approaches, in which ‘...reality is considered multiple and subjective...’ (Burke, 2016:332; Smith and Caddick, 2012;

Sparkes and Smith, 2014). The assumption that participants knew “the truth”, which they would approve, when reviewing materials, such as interview transcripts, was viewed to contradict the key tenets of interpretivist research (Sparkes and Smith, 2014). Comparably, when considering Tracy’s (2010) suggestions, it was regarded problematic that “quality” would be achieved, only if a researcher demonstrated that their study met all eight research criteria (Burke, 2016). Indeed, Sparkes and Smith (2009) suggested that the desire to adhere to predefined criteria could prevent researchers from generating new understandings in ways that might risk failure to comply with these firm expectations. When I reflected on my own interpretations of the parallel perspectives to research quality that Tracy (2010) proposed, I commented:

It seems there is an assumption that the more I abide by criteria, the “better” my study. Yet, this is a scientific interpretation, which I have been distancing myself throughout my PhD. Although I found it hard to find comfort in uncertainty and the exposing nature of my reflexive work in particular, I hope that the reader will recognise the quality of my work from quotes, research comments, and reflexive notes. I believe it strengthens my PhD to view myself as an active human being whose thoughts and feelings evolve and fluctuate. It does not reduce quality. It is just different and this, I believe, some researchers find discomfoting. (Reflexive notes written at home in January 2018)

In agreement with Pillow (2003), I suggest that the messy and often-unpredictable nuances of my fieldwork enriched my experiences, as they challenged me to be reflexive in relation to my research. For instance, although I offered interview transcripts to participants for review, I viewed this less as a tool of ensuring “accuracy”. Rather, this represented an element of my reflexivity and an occasion to deepen my understandings of participant perspectives (Smith et al., 2014). My “letting go” of universal criteria, however, did not imply that I was not seeking for my research to adhere to quality-related standards (Sparkes and Smith, 2009).

Rather, my view was informed by a relativist perspective, aligned with the ideas of ‘...ontological relativism (i.e. reality is multiple, created and mind-dependent) and epistemological constructivism (i.e. knowledge is constructed and subjective)’ (Burke, 2016:334). I am inviting the reader to engage with my PhD thesis in line with criteria that Smith and Caddick (2012) drew together, for the purpose of which the authors prompted flexible use in relation to particular contexts and characteristics of research environments. I continue to ask myself:

Does my research contribute to our understandings of the UKCC CL4 award? Are the findings I present evocative, do they make the reader think? Do I present data in comprehensive and coherent accounts? Are my suggestions credible, based on the nature of my fieldwork and the time that I engaged with coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers? Am I transparent about how I conducted my work and myself throughout my study?

When I came to consider the generalisability of my work, I related to Smith (2017) and Wolcott (1995), who suggested that although we should consider generalisability as qualitative researchers, this was not meant in the sense of the statistically informed concept often found in scientific studies. Smith (2017) alluded to a notion of transferability, not as defined by Lincoln and Guba in their 1985 and 1989 work, but underpinned by an understanding of knowledge as subjective and created in multiple social realities. Indeed, I recognise that the knowledge I share in this thesis is dependent upon myself, as the researcher, who generated new insights and interpreted her research experiences. I recognised my responsibility to present my work in ways that ensured “thick description”, while equally viewing the reader to be engaged actively in this process when appraising my suggestions. Thus, the reader may

wish to consider whether certain understandings about the learning on the UKCC CL4 award could be transferred into other environments, in which adult learners engage with formal settings of learning over prolonged periods.

Moreover, I wish to consider, what Smith (2017:5) described as “analytical generalisation”, which occurs ‘...when the researcher generalises a particular set of results to an established concept or theory...’. The author suggested that the theoretical concepts used for interpretation, not the research contexts *per se*, were considered in terms of their generalisability. Informed by my reading of Atkinson (2017), I assumed that analytical generalisations could be interpreted as “fluid ideas” that I drew upon in order to make sense of the social world. Thus, I am inviting the reader to reflect whether the symbolic interactionist concepts, which I used to interpret my experiences, could be applied to alternative research fields.

These considerations were useful for me to contemplate the quality of my research. As with other methodological leanings, I understand that my choices reflect the ways in which I conceive the social world. Consideration of the perspectives presented in this chapter, helped me deal with the complexities of my work, it allowed me to expand the boundaries of my methodological understanding and strengthened my leanings as an interpretive and reflexive qualitative researcher.

Chapter 5. Findings and Discussions

Introduction to Chapter 5 Part A, B and C

The aim of this chapter and its various parts is to make theoretical sense of my research experiences with coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers on the UKCC CL4 award. To this end, I will draw on understandings, set forth in symbolic interactionist writing by Cooley (e.g. Cooley, 1897; 1902), Blumer (e.g. Blumer, 1962; 1969), Mead (1934), Strauss (e.g. Strauss, 1959; 1978), as well as suggestions by authors, such as Fine (e.g. Fine, 1979; Fine and Kleinman, 1979), Holstein and Gubrium (2000), Mezirow (1997), and Shibutani (1955).

In consideration of its length, I chose to present this component of my thesis in three parts. While I will introduce in each of these, the theoretical considerations I drew upon, I wish to present a short overview of what will follow the opening pages:

- In Chapter 5 Part A, I will draw on symbolic interactionist work to emphasise how the individuals, involved with the UKCC CL4 award, perceived it. Here, I will portray the individually distinct experiences and efforts of stakeholders.
- Then, in Chapter 5 Part B, I will move to an interpretation of the social processes, which I suggest, shaped the perceptions of coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers in relation to award processes and outcomes.
- Finally, in Chapter 5 Part C, I will make sense of findings that I would relate to the wider contexts in which coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers engaged with their own experiences, one other, and the UKCC CL4 award.

I understand that there are other ways to present my work and in fact, I considered myself recursive in my approach when I toyed with alternative ways to do so. First, I

wrote a draft in which I presented my findings in one chapter; their theoretical discussion followed in another. Then, I composed a draft, driven heavily by symbolic interactionist theorisation, in which my supervisors suggested that the presentation of my data seemed of secondary emphasis. When I then came to craft an interweaved presentation of my findings and their theory-informed discussion, I felt content that I was driving my narrative with rich accounts, while drawing on symbolic interactionist theorisation, where I considered this appropriate.

As will become apparent in the upcoming pages, I did not organise the findings and discussions according to my research questions. This is so, because the interpretivist approach I have adopted has allowed me to explore more than what I had sought to answer at the start of my doctoral study. I will return to the research questions in thesis chapter 6, however, where I will revisit key findings explicitly in response to these considerations.

Before the reader now engages with Chapter 5 Part A, B and C, I wish to reiterate that I created this separation, merely to facilitate the theoretical interpretation of a large body of data. As I hope to reveal in the superseding pages, I recognise an interconnectedness that exists between individuals, their interactions, and their wider social environments on the UKCC CL4 award.

Chapter 5 Part A. Individuals and the UKCC Coach Level 4 award

Introduction

One of the key themes that I defined during my fieldwork was that coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers were at the heart of UKCC CL4 processes. I will draw on the concept of consciousness to interpret my participants' commitment to the UKCC CL4 award in the pursuit of lifelong learning (Cooley, 1907; Mead, 1934). Then, I will discuss the individually distinct values that the engagement with the award rendered. To this end, I will lean on theorisations of self, such as the looking glass self by Cooley (1902) and Mead's (1934) "I" and "me".

Since I felt that the completion of the award as a postgraduate programme played a significant role to those I engaged with, I will turn to its discussion as a transformative experience (Mezirow, 1997; Strauss, 1959). In fact, its postgraduate features came also with challenges, particularly for those, to whom academic study was unfamiliar. I will argue that my participants engaged in situational adjustment, evolving situational understandings when adapting to postgraduate level study on the UKCC CL4 award (Becker, 1964; Strauss, 1959).

I will highlight the importance I associated with key individuals, such as managers, in supporting the learning of coaches, for which interpretation I will draw on notions of self-indication (Blumer, 1962; 1969) and self-appraisal (Strauss, 1959). Here, I will lean on the notion of attitude to interpret my research experiences with gatekeepers (Blumer, 1969). I will emphasise that the key individuals I met did not operate in isolation and use Cooley's (1897) writing on the interrelatedness between individuals and their social environments.

Individual meanings of the UKCC CL4 award

Over the course of my fieldwork, I recognised that coaches, coach educators and coach education managers viewed the UKCC CL4 award as a significant opportunity of professional development. Similar to authors, such as He et al. (2018), Irwin et al. (2004), and Mesquita et al. (2014), I noticed an understanding of the award as a component in coaches' continuous learning. When asked about this in greater depth, those involved with the award, recognised that it was necessary for coaches to interpret learning as a lifelong endeavour to keep up with the fast pace of performance sport (e.g. Werthner and Trudel, 2009). In this relation, Toni, who completed the BJA UKCC CL4 award at the time of my study, voiced his opinion as follows:

When a coach stops educating themselves, I think they're finished as an individual. There's certainly the need to develop from your personal view, work on your personal development, all the time. What I think the UKCC level 4 has done for me, is highlight further the need for me, I need to keep up my reading, my looking at stuff. It would help if my learning would be a bit more directed ... but if you send to me stuff on a regular basis, I'll eventually stop reading the emails [laughs]. But it's getting in those environments ... it's useful to say, "Oh I'm reading this, this and that is quite useful." (Toni, coach learner)

Coach education managers, who endorsed the award as a valuable opportunity for progression, echoed similar views. Jane, BJA liaison officer, regarded coaches as skilled professionals, who were expected to interpret taught content and utilise relevant insights in coaching practice. She referred to performance analysis as an exemplar of an academically driven module that, she felt, was significant for practitioners to engage with in order to confidently collaborate with other professionals, sport scientists, for instance.

She said:

One of the comments of a high performance coach to performance analysis was why did they need performance analysis because “he didn’t do it, but the performance analyst did it and they [coaches] were told.” To me, that’s just not good enough... . You know, it’s an understanding, you don’t need to do performance analysis, but you need to understand how to work with it, how to communicate, whether you’re getting the best out of it or not. Being able to question what you’re doing, move things forward or acknowledge performance analysis to move things forward. (Jane, BJA UKCC CL4 liaison officer)

Similar to conclusions following Araya et al. (2015) and Galvan et al. (2012), it could be suggested that Jane understood coaches as mature learners. Indeed, when sharing their experiences with the UKCC CL4 award, practitioners demonstrated their interest and commitment to learning. Rick told me:

You’re constantly learning, there’s one thing learning and reflecting on your practice and being a good practitioner, ongoing. But then going into an external, more academic environment puts you in a frame of mind of a different approach to things and that constantly is a good reminder and a refresher for me to keep learning... . (Rick, coach learner)

Similar to this, Dan suggested:

I could almost say every single aspect of it. It could be as bold as I gained confidence with regards, “Oh that’s something you’ve not thought before.” Or, “Now I understand a bit more why I do that or why it does or doesn’t work.” But also, running coach education courses for level 1 or 2 coaches, it confirmed understanding it at that level as well. (Dan, UKCC CL4 coach)

Comparably, some of the coach education managers recognised that the provision, which coaches completed, required continuous modifications. This, I recognised, for instance, when I spoke to Lisa, BC Level 4 Programme Director, who commented during one of our conversations:

We’ve been tweaking it as we went along. When our first cohort came to the end of their first year, the academic workload was heavy. As British Canoeing we struggled to add anything because their minds were busy with what they

had to do for the academic side. We had to hold back but we've changed that and the biggest change is coming into effect for the guys just starting. ... I like to think that the workload for them will be a bit more balanced. ... We have more of a recognition of people's individual needs and how we support them within the framework of the programme, so [we are] just mindful of the need to give some individuality and hope that we can achieve that for them. Yeah I guess that's one of the challenges to overcome. (Lisa, BC Level 4 Programme Director)

In relation to above suggestions, which I present as exemplars of participant views, I suggest that stakeholders shared an appreciation for how important it was to demonstrate continuous commitment to this process. Here, I felt that I could draw upon the concept of consciousness as set forth by Mead (1934), a similar understanding of which Cooley (1907) defined as reflective consciousness. The theorists, similar to Blumer (1969) and Strauss (1959), theorised that we, as individuals, were attentive to ourselves in our surroundings. With this we would create an awareness of the “other”, which Mead (1934) viewed as the things that surround us. As active agents, we would engage in a process of interpreting the thoughts, behaviours, and interactions of others and ourselves. According to Mead, with this, we would reorganise the interpretations of our experiences and thoughts in a fluid sense. Our appraisal of different situations was shaped by our sensitivity to surroundings, which we would succeed to refine, if we immersed ourselves in diverse environments and accepted that we would not only affect, but also be impacted by the situations we encountered (Mead, 1934).

In a symbolic interactionist sense, then, it could be suggested that those involved with the UKCC CL4 award understood the process of learning by internalising and interpreting the situations they experienced and the individuals they met. I propose based on suggestions by practitioners, such as Toni and Rick, but also by managers, such as Lisa, that those involved with the UKCC CL4 award, recognised the processes of

education and learning, in, what Mead (1934) termed, a fluid sense. As Jane described, for instance, it was useful for those, who were involved with the UKCC CL4 award to advance their consciousness by taking into consideration what occurred in the various social environments. This could be viewed necessary given the multidimensional nature of surroundings, in which coach learning and coaching practice took place (Burkitt, 2008; Holstein and Gubrium, 2000; Mead, 1934).

Indeed, the personal and professional circumstances of my participants differed and shaped the ways in which they interpreted the UKCC CL4 award. This was particularly evident when I engaged with practitioners, such as Connor, who had accomplished the award, when we spoke. He defined the ways in which the perceived learning on the award had shaped his work as a practitioner in the following way:

I've used every opportunity to access Nick and Evelyn⁹, who have watched me in a session, whereas without that you would be using the same coaches to observe you perform and you would get repetition of feedback ... It was good to get a pair of fresh eyes looking at coaching practice without necessarily getting technical awareness of what you were teaching. It's helped my coaching for sure, the feedback, but also the literature available has been very useful in practice, which I'm using now to reflect in practice or evaluate situations that happen when I work with athletes. (Connor, UKCC CL4 coach)

Will deemed his learning significant to challenging his assumptions. He told me:

It's inspired me again. I think understanding what information is out there and how we can make ourselves better. It has bolstered up my enthusiasm again. I think just improving my own core knowledge but also keeping me passionate about learning. I've always been passionate about judo but not necessarily passionate about learning and understanding how my athletes will benefit from me was useful on the course. (Will, coach learner)

⁹ Nick delivered on the BC UKCC CL4 award as a HEi guest lecturer. Evelyn was core member on the BC Level 4 board on behalf of UoS and acted also as a HEi lecturer during residential events.

Dan appeared to have shared this feeling of inspiration that Will described, when he commented:

The value has been the process I've gone through and the learning I've had. [For] me that kind of endorsement of me as a coach has not come through the certificate, it's come through the process, if that makes sense. The process has been amazingly powerful, it's inspired me to study the MSc that I'm studying at the moment. (Dan, UKCC CL4 coach)

Teresa has drawn on insights gained from the UKCC CL4 award to cope with personal demands that she faced at the time of her learning journey; she commented:

For me, as a person it was, it came at a time in my life, where there was a huge upheaval, which forced me to look at my behaviour and my intelligence how I'd arrived at where was and the level four gave me the skills to reflect on that properly. (Teresa, UKCC CL4 coach)

Mitch explained the ways in which his perceived learning would fit with his practitioner environments as follows:

It's being more critical, I think I apply that to life in a broader sense, in terms of society and how people come to be, who they are. How groups of people support each other in being who they are... . A lot of the things I learned on the course about looking outside of the boundaries of social structures, even with a coach, the whole tracksuit and whistle thing, you know why coaches talk so much when they don't necessarily need to... . Yeah, I think it's broadened my perspective on life as well as coaching. (Mitch, UKCC CL4 coach)

David personalised the learning he recognised in yet another manner and explained:

Structured self-reflection [is of value]. And having a chance to look for theory behind my applied knowledge and try to build on that. The other thing is to be side by side with other judo coaches, discussing things with them and see where they're at, what they're thinking. Everybody's opinion in the room, whether it's the club coach who works with under 16s or whether it's development ... For me, they're all part of my organisation, I have to understand them, their needs. Outside of the course, it gives me an understanding of people's developments and needs as well. That's, for me, very useful. (David, coach learner)

In relation to comments presented here, I propose that participants' diverse ways to define meanings in the context of the UKCC CL4 award could be related to their understanding of self (e.g. Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934; Strauss, 1959). I wish to allude to Cooley's looking glass self, which the theorist set forth to explain how we, as individuals, evolved our sense of self by interpreting our own conduct and by considering the ways in which, we felt, others behaved in response (Reitzes, 1980).

Cooley suggested that we possessed a self-idea which comprises of the ways in which we believe we would act and interact with others. To understand further our sense of self, we would draw on interactions with others and contemplate particularly those aspects of their conduct, which we perceived to occur in relation to our own actions (Cooley, 1902). While we cannot control the ways in which other people act, according to Cooley, their conduct would determine our self-feeling. In this sense, Cooley's looking glass self could be considered to comprise of the interplay between our self-ideas, the images we believed others associate with our demeanour, our interpretations of the behaviours that others demonstrate, and our subsequent self-feeling (Cooley, 1902). According to Cooley, feeling a sense of confirmation of our self-ideas was likely to result in uplifting self-feelings, while we might endure frustration, shame, or other undesirable senses, when we recognise a disparity between our own understandings and the opinions that others share with us.

This perspective could be considered resembling Mead's notion of self as a multidimensional concept, constituted by "I" and "me" (Mead, 1934). Mead construed "I" as the behaviour we adopt at a certain moment. An example of this could be a coach's verbal contribution during a taught session on the UKCC CL4 award. According to Mead, certain thoughts and interpretations would precede and follow this conduct,

and encompass expressions of “me”. In the above example, “me” would include the coach’s thoughts and interpretations prior and subsequent to articulating their perspective. Mead wrote that we would unfold a self-consciousness that enables us to evaluate our thoughts, behaviours and interpret the actions of others. According to Mead, this self-consciousness of our conduct *in situ* (i.e. “I”) and the thoughts we associate with it (i.e. “me”) would be useful to creating an awareness of how we presented ourselves in different social situations. In turn, this recurrent interplay of “I” and “me” would prompt our self-understandings and our continuous development of self.

In light of these theoretical contemplations, I propose that coaches internalised how others perceived their behaviours to add to their own understandings of self. It could be suggested that although what Cooley (1902) defined self-ideas of coaches, such as Connor, differed from information he encountered in UKCC CL4 environments, he appeared to be prepared to embrace these other considerations voiced by educators or found in research papers. From recollections such as those of Mitch and David, too, I noticed a desire among practitioners to consider their self-ideas in context with insights gained from engagement with course content and dialogues with educators. This could be considered in relation to the educational settings, where practitioners adopted behaviours that educators would recognise as signs that coaches had started to interweave novel insights with practice (e.g. Chesterfield et al., 2010). Further to this, however, it appeared from comments by Mitch and Will that they themselves believed that they had begun to enact self-understandings (e.g. in coaching practice) that were informed by the perceived learning that had occurred on the UKCC CL4 award.

To revisit Mead's view, I wish to compare the thoughts that Mitch, David and Teresa, shared with me to the theoretical notion of "me". Mitch contemplated his increasingly critical perspectives towards interpersonal encounters, while David considered himself more successful in structured self-reflection and Teresa voiced her reflections when coping with a challenging phase in her personal life. What Mead described as "I" could then comprise Mitch's articulation of his views, David's engagement in reflection, and Teresa's management of her turmoil. Together, I propose that their contemplations (i.e. "me") and behaviours (i.e. "I") were integral for coaches to make sense of their own conduct and the behaviours of others (e.g. coach educators, athletes). In turn, I offer in accordance with Mead's perspective, that this led practitioners, such as Dan, Mitch, Will, David, and Teresa, to notice when engaging with situations within and outside coaching that they had begun to draw on learning from the UKCC CL4 award to develop their sense of self. In light of my reading of Cooley (1902) and Mead (1934), I propose here that the individuals I met throughout my fieldwork engaged in a recursive process of meaning creation from interpreting individual and interpersonal processes on the UKCC CL4 award. Indeed, the coaches in my study seemed to portray a preparedness to learn from engagements with award situations and those educators, who facilitated learning in these settings. I propose that this is novel in the context of high performance coach education, where conclusions so far, such as from Chesterfield et al. (2010), Jones and Allison (2014), Mallett and Dickens (2009), Townsend and Cushion (2017), pointed towards a protectiveness of practitioner knowledge and limited preparedness among coaches to interweave content taught in situations of formal coach education with established assumptions, beliefs, and behaviours.

The UKCC CL4 award as a postgraduate qualification

During my fieldwork, I recognised that one of the aspects that my participants considered important represented the prospect of obtaining the PG Dip upon completion of the UKCC CL4 award. It seemed as though the participation in academic tasks, such as the reading of research papers and writing of essays, was considered a milestone in elevating practitioner understandings beyond their current settings of sports coaching. Indeed, several learners, who participated in my study, had no or limited experience with HE prior to the UKCC CL4 award. For this reason, I suggest that the engagement with postgraduate content and assessments shaped the light in which these coaches viewed themselves and their abilities. For instance, Colin commented:

The outdoor industry is so diverse and things can change so quickly that you do end up doing so many different things in your day-to-day work... I guess the nice thing with the Level 4 is that I am now seeing how the research fits with recreational coaching. One of the main things that I found is that people don't come to me for ongoing coaching, they come to me when there's a hurdle to overcome or when they want to meet likeminded people or they just got confidence knock, that kind of thing. To cope with that, it's [completion of UKCC CL4 award] been a really powerful thing really. There's literature to support this. (Colin, coach learner)

Having developed his expertise prior to award completion as an elite athlete and practitioner, Will recognised the UKCC CL4 award as a long-awaited opportunity to participate in HE. He stated:

From when I was 17 up to 23, I kept on getting injured. So I decided to leave full-time training and pursue coaching. I was quite fortunate because I was at a full-time centre and my coach allowed me to progress. So, I went on the level 2 coaching course, then went on to level 3 and went straight on to level 4, which was perfect for me because I had no real school education. I had a school education, which was GCSEs but I committed my life to judo so everything I was doing was judo so I was fortunate to have the opportunity to go into the coaching level. When I heard about the level 4, I wasn't one of the first people to be considered for it but I put myself forward for it because I wanted to be involved in it for sort of my own judo career and also developing myself really.

This [UKCC CL4 award] has opened my eyes. There are things I didn't really have the understanding. I think this Level 4 is brilliant. It's helped me identify things with athletes ... There's stuff from strength and conditioning and athlete awareness. I've gone out and said, "You need to see somebody", because I don't have the competence to say, "This is it" because I'm not an expert, but I have the competence to refer them, which is really good. (Will, coach learner)

He explained how he had perceived his academic study on the UKCC CL4 award useful to practice:

In terms of my coaching practice, I would say that I'm probably prided that I was considering motivational climate and all my interaction with both, the athletes and parents, as being part of that, so not only at the sessional level. When I'm sending out emails to the athletes or parents, the importance of ... using appropriate language with reference to growth mind set for example. I am now making sure that I am modelling in my coaching behaviour what it is that I want them to be adopting in their athletic performance and in their practice. ... Also, I'm probably more comfortable when individualising doesn't happen because of either the session content or the section of river we're using doesn't allow for it. I'm more comfortable in letting that be now than I would have been previously. (Steve, BC coach educator, UKCC CL4 coach)

Thomas told me during one of our conversations:

The Level 4 ... It was, not a shock, but it was still very challenging, in a positive way. I thought I knew a lot about coaching, coach education and I still think I do, but the academic side of things enabled me to challenge some of my perceptions or assumptions. It's been 25 years to the September that I started my first degree when I started this one [laughs]. But apart from the first term, which was ... trying to climb a train that is driving along. Apart from that, I settled into the programme and I enjoyed it... . The different assessment and academic literature got me to do things I haven't even considered. I suppose that's true lack of knowledge when you don't know what you don't know [laughs]. So, I found that the Level 4 process, for me, was brilliant in the time I accessed it in terms of coming in as a very experienced coach and coach educator, thinking I was in one place and then realising I was in a different place. (Thomas, UKCC CL4 coach)

In a similar vein, Grace noted that she interpreted the often-challenging academic journal articles as opportunities to develop her approach to coaching:

It really challenges your practise to go off and read ten articles, all of which say different things, but actually only one is about the way you coach and the

others challenge the way you coach. It gets you to think about it a lot more. I'd say it's a very unique way of doing it, but I think it's really positive, because it prompts you to challenge yourself. There's a few people on the course, who have said, "I came here on day one and I thought I knew exactly what I was talking about and actually now, I'm changing how I do things because of the things that have challenged me as a coach." (Grace, UKCC CL4 coach)

In relation to these suggestions, I propose that the UKCC CL4 award embodied a transformative experience to coaching practitioners in particular. To make sense of this, I wish to draw on the work by Strauss (1959) and Mezirow (1997), who offered process-orientated views of transformation. Strauss (1959:91) considered transformation a process in adult life which '...beginning, middle, and end bear some discernible relationships to each other'. While we, as individuals, might consider ourselves changed in the outlooks we took throughout our lives, the theorist recognised this as our continuous passing through various phases of our lives. As we developed our perspectives over time, Strauss (1959) argued that we would not only add new insights to existing knowledge, but that we would also transform what we knew before. In doing so, similar to Cooley and Mead in their writing, the theorist suggested that we would alter also the ways in which we defined our sense of self (Strauss, 1959).

In a similar vein, I suggest that Mezirow (1997) understood learning as a process of transformation. This would occur when learners altered their frames of reference, which encompassed processes of our thinking, our behaviours and our emotions. These would represent '...the structures of assumptions through which we understand our experiences...' (Mezirow, 1997:5). In our frame of reference, which each individual would hold, Mezirow distinguished that our habits of mind represented routine thoughts, actions, and feelings. They represent assumptions that we embedded over

time from social, cultural, political, and educational experiences. These would shape our more specific points of view, ‘...the constellation of belief, value judgment, attitude, and feeling that shapes a particular interpretation’ (Mezirow, 1997:6).

In the context of my study, I propose that coaches, such as Will and Thomas, whose recollections I presented above, engaged in diverse phases in their adult lives (Strauss, 1959). As an example, Will had understood himself and his expertise in close connection to his athletic experiences before immersing himself in a new phase as a coach and yet another one when becoming a coach learner on the UKCC CL4 award. It could be argued in line with Strauss (1959) that Will’s engagement in these different roles and responsibilities transformed how he thought, felt, and acted. In a similar vein, I would argue that Thomas has transformed the ways in which he appraised his skills and assumptions according to his experiences in the two decades that he had been a sports coach. His engagement with the UKCC CL4 award represented a new phase in his life during which Thomas has learned to inform his practice with research-informed understandings.

Indeed, I propose that coaching practitioners modified their frames of reference from the processes they engaged with on the UKCC CL4 award (Mezirow, 1997). For instance, this became apparent when Thomas and Grace commented that they felt prompted by the content taught on the award to reevaluate expert understandings they had held for decades. As suggested in the previous section in this chapter, it appeared that coach learners demonstrated an openness to inform previous understandings with new, academic insights. Thereby, I tentatively offer that the recurrent engagement with academic delivery and assessment informed the habits of mind that practitioners had developed over time (e.g. the importance Steve has recognised in

motivational climate). In consequence, these underpinning assumptions, which learners developed from completing postgraduate tasks on the UKCC CL4 award, shaped their points of view in day-to-day coaching practice (e.g. Steve's language in dialogues with athletes and their parents) (Mezirow, 1997).

Yet, the alterations to the ways coaches thought and acted did not occur instantaneously. Rather, the practitioners I engaged with were open about the often-demanding tasks they accomplished on the UKCC CL4 award. For instance, Connor verbalised his perspective as follows:

Yeah it's crazy [laughs]... . It's been very challenging, I would say, from an academic point of view ... giving it the time that it deserves with my busy schedule. I've also got a full-time job for Sport Scotland. I've got a family, four kids and I live on an island in Scotland and it's the same as with everybody. It's very demanding to find time. I found the level 4 programme quite fascinating and rewarding but quite challenging at times. (Connor, UKCC CL4 coach)

At times, Lewis felt as though the postgraduate level study reached beyond his perceived abilities; he told me:

I think for me, I'm not particularly academic ... It's difficult for me to go, "Right see you at the end of January. Off you go." I find that difficult, quite easily get lost or side tracked, whereas, if, once every two or three weeks, there was someone checking in and having a sort of conference call or skype call to go, "Right how's it going? Where are you? What have you found that's worked well? What are you struggling with?" A lot of the modules that I've looked at, I think, "What do they want?" I need to see ... This is what they want, this is what the expectations are. (Lewis, coach learner)

In a similar vein, Colin revealed the burdening feelings, which he sensed when he commenced his learning journey on the CL4 award:

I've always struggled with the classroom environment, I go quiet and I know this and it frustrates me. In the first sessions [on the UKCC CL4 award], I went quiet when I got put on a spot and when I get put on a spot, all the answers they disappear, they're completely gone. Just part of this is to build up on that a

little bit and not overcome it but be happier in that environment. (Colin, coach learner)

As we continued our conversation, Colin went on to suggest:

Originally, that first residential I'd thought I'd be splitting off more than I could do, I really did. It's quite a daunting prospect, starting all of that but really what I needed to do, is get stuck into that because the nice thing is that it's a subject that I'm quite interested in and I've got what I think to be quite a good background knowledge of. So, the main thing for me with the level 4 was to learn the academic speak. (Colin, coach learner)

In relation to these, what I would describe, process-orientated understandings, I wish to emphasise that the learning journeys that coaches described, who participated in my study, were far from linear. Rick recalled a point during his studies when he questioned why he had committed to the UKCC CL4 award in the first instance. He disclosed the following during one of our conversations:

To be honest, after the first year ... I spoke to my wife shall I even bother carrying on at all. I've got the diploma, I progressed a little bit, I got the reflection and things that will see me through the next couple of years that I can develop myself. But then, knowing what the outcomes were and talking to my wife helped me see that it will be really valuable in the end. I know it's difficult, balancing everything but that might be worth it again so I got persuaded to carry on. (Rick, coach learner)

James, whom I spoke to shortly after his completion of the award, admitted:

I think the fact that it's over gives a whole different insight. If you would've asked me during the spring module I wouldn't have given you much positive I think. You really had to give the whole thing time. It was fun to see how it actually came to a circle and the circle was reasonably well closed ... so I think the programme itself, the level 4, I was happy with the way the whole thing came back around. (James, UKCC CL4 coach)

On another occasion, he went on to suggest:

I was never very organised and still not very organised ... it was definitely a challenge to get things done on paper when it became time to do so. You know you'd get a lot of ideas going and these ideas become a circles and to get those

circles to actually intertwine, it was definitely challenging. But you know, each assignment, once I kind of figure out, I did, after the first assignment, by winter time, ... I suggested that we all get together and have an email exchange every week and I think it was really useful, to me anyways, I think everybody, because we were going through a lot of the ... So yeah, it's just figuring out how to do it differently. (James, UKCC CL4 coach)

Mitch described how he coped with different journal articles, one by one, in the following way:

I think I had a little bit of a head start because I had attended classes at HE before, so I had a little bit of an insight into academic writing. But still it was a challenge and I could see that my writing style got better over the year and my language improved. Some of the papers are pretty heavy going, you find some of the papers are easy to read, where other papers are very difficult. You feel a little disjointed because you focus so much on what they actually convey. (Mitch, UKCC CL4 coach)

To coach learners, I suggest, the postgraduate language and expectations often challenged deep-rooted practitioner understandings (Townsend and Cushion, 2017).

To make sense of such perceptions, I wish to refer to Strauss (1959), who assumed that we individuals had to evolve situational understandings to adapt to demands of our social environments. The theorist proposed that the ways in which we perceived and managed expectations would stand in close relation to our '...history – a flow of collective or public events...' (Strauss, 1959:5). In a similar vein, Becker (1964:44) argued that adults demonstrated situational adjustment when they moved between different social situations, in which they would learn '...the requirements of continuing in each situation and the success in it'.

In educational situations, Strauss theorised that learners would feel overwhelmed by instances that exceeded their distinct pace of study. Nevertheless, Strauss (1959:41) argued that individuals would be committed to adapt to such situations, if they recognised that this engagement was '...worth striving for, fighting for...' in contrast to

‘...what is to be avoided, abhorred...’. Comparably, Becker (1964) wrote that if individuals held a strong desire to continue engaging in a particular setting, then they would evaluate thoroughly what the expectations were, establish whether they could demonstrate expected behaviours, and subsequently conduct themselves in ways required of them. The theorist noted that this process comprised of a series of small alterations, so-called situational adjustments (Becker, 1964). As a whole, the adaptations to various situations, would allow us individuals to comprehend what was required of us, if we aimed for ongoing participation in certain environments. To this end, Becker (1964) considered it our responsibility to gain in-depth understandings of situations at hand as well as to develop ways in which we could adjust our beliefs and actions to ensure we were able to continue contributing to our chosen surroundings.

I believe that coach learners adjusted to the demands of the UKCC CL4 award in a series of modules and assignments, as smaller adjustments, which culminated in enhanced feelings of ability (Becker, 1964). For instance, I consider the recurrent engagement with postgraduate tasks significant for practitioners, such as Lewis and Connor, who had little experience with HE, in order to develop situational understandings in situations of the UKCC CL4 award (Vryan et al., 2003).

Coaches’ situational adjustment did not progress in a linear fashion; rather it seemed determined by a rollercoaster of successes and setbacks. Upon reflection of comments, such as those by James and Rick, I propose that coaches fathomed assessment results as instances of situational adjustment, defining these as impressions of their abilities (Becker, 1964). In this sense, positive assessment results reaffirmed coaches’ expertise, while negative feedback instilled feelings of uncertainty in regard of their skills to perform at postgraduate level. What, I felt, challenged

coaches further was the part-time, largely distance learning-like, nature of the award. At some points, I suggest in line with what Strauss (1959) understood, that the postgraduate level of study might have exceeded coach learners' expectations and perceived abilities. This, I suggest was familiar to James, Marcus, Lewis, and Mitch, whose comments I presented on the previous pages. With continuous commitment, however, I postulate that coaches developed an understanding of the distinct ways in which they were able to manage postgraduate level study. Indeed, in light of Strauss' further comments, I felt that the UKCC CL4 award represented an enriching journey, however, equally came with a demanding set of responsibilities with its benchmark at HE level 7. Nevertheless, from my theoretical reading of Becker (1964) and Strauss (1959), I would argue that despite experiencing "highs and lows" when completing the UKCC CL4 award, the series of different situations, whether perceived to confirm or challenge practitioner abilities, contributed to the increasing situational understandings of academic environments.

In accordance with conclusions by Becker (1964) and Strauss (1959) on the importance of continuity when adjusting to situations, it appeared that the instilled desire for continuous learning and a longing to complete a postgraduate qualification led coach learners to persist with academic delivery and assessments. In doing so, I suggest that coaches were successful in their negotiations of former understandings with their new postgraduate experiences of the UKCC CL4 award.

The significant roles of coach educators and managers

In relation to the ways in which coaches perceived the learning environments on the UKCC CL4 award, I recognised coach educators and HEi lecturers, as well as coach education managers as key individuals in shaping practitioner experiences of course delivery, assessment and organisation. Above all, I understand that coach learners committed to adopting the new, academic considerations, which coach educators introduced on the UKCC CL4 award. Yet, I suggest that it was significant to practitioner progression that HEi lecturers, in particular, acknowledged the expertise, desires and expectations of their practitioner audience. Evelyn shed light on what she expected HEi staff should do to aid practitioners' postgraduate learning:

I think having an understanding of what the level 4 coaches are like. The skills, experiences and challenges they bring, is something that somebody who's new to delivering the level 4 might need to be upskilled on. This comes with years working with coaches and you go, "Yes these aren't the same as undergraduate coaches." I think it's that understanding. (Evelyn, HEi lecturer)

Gaining this understanding, however, was challenging, as Susan experienced when she was tasked on behalf of scUK with the management of the UKCC CL4 award across GBs and HEis. The award required stakeholders to rethink their views of coach education.

She said:

When I first started, it was quite complicated. People didn't quite understand what it was. It was too big for individual people to write or deliver because clearly, going from a ten-day level 3 programme to a two-year programme is daunting... I wanted to change it away from high performance. I wanted to move away from the perception that the Level 4 and high performance go hand in hand. I wanted to rebrand it high performing coach or something along those lines. This takes away people's perceptions and barrier from the Level 4. Gradually, we're doing it, yes. (Susan, scUK coach education manager)

Paul, a HEi lecturer, recognised that it was important for him and colleagues to reevaluate their approaches to the delivery and assessment at postgraduate level 7 when teaching experienced practitioners on the UKCC CL4 award. He told me:

I guess the coaches that come on to the programme, don't necessarily come from academic backgrounds. As an educator, understanding those differences and applying things in different ways, approach the classroom sessions in different ways. That's a balance that we need to work on as academics, who work at the university... . We do try and, I guess, choose assessments that we feel are appropriate. We use video diaries, case studies ... where they get to apply what they're learning to situations within their coaching practice. So, it's a balance ... When we mark work, we need to think about what it is that we're actually looking for from these coaches because it still has to be of a level 7 standard. But we also have to take into account the non-academic background. It is something we will continue working on. (Paul, HEi lecturer)

Theo, also HEi lecturer, valued his experience of working with elite athletes as a sports nutritionist. Having gained an insight into the high performance arena, he believed, supported him when tailoring his academic delivery to suit the mature practitioner audience. He voiced his thoughts as follows:

In my opinion, if you're gonna be teaching coaches, you have to have a hybrid academic, as a token. The academic has to have practical experience of working in elite sport. Or they need to reflect on how they want to teach to coaches. It needs to be applied. I don't think you can have an academic who has a PhD, ten years of research on biomechanics, teaches biomechanics, does research in it. I don't think that they are the right person to go and teach coaches because they've never worked with athletes, they've never worked in the real world of elite sport or even development sport. That's why I think it's got to be the hybrid academics, so the university get together with the governing body. I think that's how you're gonna get the best course. (Theo, HEi lecturer)

Appearing fulfilled with a self-understanding as a “hybrid academic”, Tyler illustrated in the following way that he developed his delivery on the UKCC CL4 award to meet practitioner interests:

I've always found it very beneficial to use the experience from my athletics background, even if I go and do some work with rugby, football or sky divers. In

many ways, even if you're not knowledgeable about the sport, I think there is a common language in sport, where people find ways to communicate with each other, even if it's not in their own sport... . But I think using all the practical experience you have [as an academic] is really important just to give examples of where they [coaches] are talking about when they've communicated with athletes or when there's been parental issues. (Tyler, HEi lecturer)

From my research experiences with educators and managers, such as those, whose thoughts I presented overleaf, I would argue that Susan, Theo, Evelyn, Tyler among those stakeholders, who engaged with coach learners and me, recognised themselves as “significant others” in educational situations of the UKCC CL4 award (Cushion et al., 2017). Their awareness of coaches’ background and attention to ways that could support practitioner learning could be interpreted in relation to Blumer’s (1969) notion of self-indication and the similar concept of self-appraisal by Strauss (1959).

I view the foundation of these self-engagements in the symbolic interactionist assumption that the meanings, which we as human beings create, are shaped by the interactions we have with ourselves and others (Blumer, 1962; 1969; 1981; Cooley, 1902; 1918; Mead, 1934; Strauss, 1959). At the essence of Blumer and Strauss’ suggestions in this context, I consider our engagement in recurrent thought processes, when recognising and interpreting the things in our surroundings. In communication with ourselves, we would create opinions of what we notice, we define meanings, and determine ways in which we may wish to act based on these meanings (Blumer, 1962). Strauss (1959:36) noted that we would ask ourselves what we ‘...’can’ and ‘cannot’, ‘will’ and ‘will not’, ‘should’ and ‘should not’...’ do or say when we engaged in self-appraisal. In a similar vein to his forerunner Mead, Strauss described human experience as a process of “becoming”, at which heart he defined our ability to immerse ourselves in recurrent appraisals of our own and others’ actions; we would

then utilise our conclusions as the foundations for our behaviours (Strauss, 1959).

Blumer (1969) cautioned not to conflate these self-indications with other, external influences that shaped the ways in which we behaved. Rather, he highlighted the former as integral to constructing conscious, purposeful actions that we, as individuals, demonstrated. Blumer suggested:

By virtue of indicating such things to himself, he places himself over against them and is able to act back against them, accepting them, rejecting them, or transforming them in accordance with how he defines or interprets them. His behaviour, accordingly, is not a result of such things as environmental pressures, stimuli, motives, attitudes, and ideas but arises instead from how he interprets and handles these things in the action which he is constructing (Blumer, 1969:81-82).

With this, I would argue that the theorist emphasised his view of human beings as active agents in their participation in the social world, which was highlighted further in Strauss' view of self-appraisal as a process we used to revisit former behaviours, reappraise how we thought and felt about them, and adapt actions accordingly (Strauss, 1959).

In connection to the data examples I presented overleaf, I suggest that educators and managers, who recognised how and why it was important to align the UKCC CL4 award not only with HE demands, but practitioner understandings, engaged in processes of self-indication (Blumer, 1969) or self-appraisal (Strauss, 1959). I felt that it was important for these key individuals to take into consideration external influences, such as those features that differed on the UKCC CL4 award in comparison to educational situations usually encountered with undergraduate and postgraduate university students (Blumer, 1969). As Evelyn, Paul, and Theo prompted, it appeared to be of particular significance for HEi lecturers to recognise that coach learners would face a

steep learning curve when it came to adapting to postgraduate content and assessments on the UKCC CL4 award. Yet, stakeholders, such as Evelyn and Susan argued that the award required not only those, who completed it, but also those, who organised and delivered it ‘...to move from one status base to another...’ when preparing for the interactions with coaching practitioners (Strauss, 1959:76).

To this end, I offer that the opinions that Susan, Paul, Theo and Tyler shared, could be considered examples of self-interactions, in the processes of which, stakeholders revisited and altered deep-rooted views of education and learning. In light of writing by Blumer (1969) and Strauss (1959), however, I wish to reiterate that this did not occur by a mere erasing and overwriting of assumptions. Rather, these educators and managers engaged in purposeful and continuous reflection upon existing perspectives to develop new assumptions, regarded better suitable for the situations that they encountered on the UKCC CL4 award.

In this connection, I wish to refer to my research experiences with Nicole, whose behaviours were particularly unclear to me. When I travelled to my first data collection site of the BJA UKCC CL4 award, I was fraught with uncertainty and apprehension. Susan, my gatekeeper in scUK at this time in my research, had established the initial contact with the course organisers; she explained my work to stakeholders in the BJA and SHU. Moreover, on my behalf, she received confirmation that I was permitted to attend BJA UKCC CL4 residential events. Susan was also the person, who emailed me the dates of upcoming delivery days, location of this delivery and the time that this started on the first of two residential delivery days. Unaware that this would become the norm, I had no contact with Jane and Nicole, my liaison officers, who, I had

assumed, would communicate key information. When I met Nicole during my first days in the research field of the BJA UKCC CL4 award, I wrote:

Nicole greeted me warm-heartedly with a kiss on the cheek. Weird. I have never met her in person prior to today. My first thought was, “???” Anyway, I forced a laugh, played along, and made small talk with her about the traffic. Then, it was time for the class to commence. (Field notes written at Sheffield Hallam University, May 2015)

I felt irritated because of the lack of email contact from Nicole prior to above-recollected conversation. In the weeks before this first face-to-face meeting, I felt impatient to receive a response from Nicole to my numerous emails that related to the time and location of the first residential delivery days that I anticipated to attend for the purpose of my research. During our encounter, I was astonished that Nicole did not seem embarrassed about her absent email contact; I remember thinking to myself, *“Surely she must have seen my emails in her inbox and let them slip lower and lower in the list?”* While I remained unsure “what to make” of my experiences, I sought to persuade myself that a busy schedule was the reason for which she had been unable to respond to my queries. Later in the day, I noted:

During the 15-minute break, Nicole approached me. She asked me about my work, how I get on and what I do – everything really friendly and from an interest point of view. Tomorrow, at 11:00 am, we will talk about the prior work of the coaches. She even wants to give me access to the level 4 Sheffield Hallam University blackboard. Yesterday, I was not sure how she felt about my research and my presence here, but I now feel as though she is not sceptical at all. She just does not appear to be good at replying to emails. (Field notes written at Sheffield Hallam University, May 2015)

One day later, I wrote:

Nicole forgot or did not have time to upload the level 4 files on my USB pen. This would have been ideal, but I am going to email her about it and maybe she will reply now that she spoke to me in person. (Field notes written at Sheffield Hallam University, May 2015)

Months passed, several emails sent, but I did not receive a single reply to my emails; whether I emphasised the urgency of my inquiry in the body of my writing or sent my email communication with high importance, responses remained absent. I felt angry and frustrated, but more so, I started to question the ways in which the responsibilities on the UKCC CL4 award were distributed. Nicole seemed engrossed in the demands of her role as the leading liaison officer. Jane did not seem to visit every residential event; I met her in my research field on two occasions, once, when she was reviewing a module taught on the award and, again, during coaches' oral examination completed at the end of their studies. On one of my final days of my fieldwork, I reflected on the effort that the award management comprised and wrote:

Maybe the level 4 is something that cannot be simply added to the everyday responsibilities, the way that Nicole tries to do it!? It requires greater resources, but would then allow greater investment of those, who organise it. ... One person simply isn't enough as far as I can tell. (Field notes taken at Stirling Court Hotel, September 2016)

I am drawing on these research notes to demonstrate that, over the course of my field-based research, I was absorbed in contemplating how key individuals acted in the environments of the UKCC CL4 award. This immersion could be related to Blumer's writing on "interpretive processes" that underpinned our thoughts, feelings, and actions. The theorist perceived that human beings would draw upon continuous interpretations in order to evolve and alter the meanings we defined in relation to our environments (Blumer, 1969). Accordingly, we would not only develop new interpretations, but also revise our pre-established understandings in the context of new situations or in light of new information. To Blumer, these interpretive processes occur in close connection to processes of self-indications discussed earlier in this section (Blumer, 1962). These processes were complex, as they were aligned also with

our attitudes, which we created based on the fluid meanings we defined for them.

Similar to Strauss (1959), Blumer (1969:93), wrote that our attitudes as a ‘...tendency ... a state of readiness...’ alone were not sufficient for our actions to alter. Rather, it was our responsibility to evolve our thoughts and actions according to the interpretive processes we assumed in relation to ourselves, our interpersonal encounters, and the external influences we identified in our surroundings.

To make sense of my experiences with gatekeepers, I wish to revisit two considerations in relation to Blumer’s arguments. First, although I believe that Nicole, for instance, developed a tendency to interact with me, this was not sufficient to implement her intentions in not only our face-to-face dialogues, but also our email communication (Blumer, 1969). In a symbolic interactionist sense, I suggest that her actions were shaped further by the external influences she coped with on a day-to-day basis including her responsibilities as an academic and the ways in which she interpreted these and her UKCC CL4 related commitments. Secondly, I offer that I had created an image of Nicole based on interpretive processes of our limited communication. Indeed, I arrived at certain conclusions before I met Nicole in person. In line with Blumer’s suggestions, in my first direct encounter with Nicole, I recognised the divergence my opinions held in comparison to her open demeanour during our dialogues. I believe that this led me to revisit the pre-established meanings I had created. In a symbolic interactionist sense, I continued this process throughout my fieldwork in accordance with the diverse situations that I encountered on the UKCC CL4 award (Blumer, 1969).

In further relation to this, I consider it of significance to refer also to the lack of clarity that existed in terms of “right ways” of UKCC CL4 management. These paired quotes

indicate how Susan acknowledged that the temporary nature of coach education could contribute to the diversities I recognised in my research environments. She conveyed:

We're dealing with a messy system at the minute. In ten years' time, everything will look very different when the message comes through from youngsters through to other programmes about coaching. At the minute, we are dealing with a very ad hoc system that's got a lot of people who have been around a long time ago, who have done no qualifications because that's just the way coaching was ... merged with a group of people who have got this [the UKCC CL4 award].

I just think it needs somebody driving it. I think somebody needs to be firm, clear and almost ruthless. The problem with Governing Bodies as well is that staff turnover frequently. You educate staff, get them to one point and they leave. You have to start again. I think we could also do with backing of UK Sport and Sport England, so they're firmer about it and then look at all coach development programmes and see where they can sit in the bigger picture. You could have the level 4, with a bit of the UK Sport ECAP programme and place them in a model. So, if you do any coach developing programmes, you're 25, 50, 75% to obtaining the level 4. But it needs backing from UK Sport and then somebody really strong to drive it. An organisation that holds the strings to say, "You will do this programme" and then an individual, who has the passion to drive it. (Susan, scUK coach education manager)

Harry voiced the following perspective:

If you look at other professions ... and then the people who we call coaches. We need to engage in a better understanding of how they can shape their learning, understanding of what they do and offer a wider range of opportunities for them to do that. ... At the moment, a lot of delivery is at the volunteer end than it is at the professional end, so trying to get those people to value CPD [continuous professional development] in that professional sense is quite difficult because it's time, it's money, well, to some extent, "How is the Level 4 as CPD gonna help me perform better in the club?" It's difficult for them to make that connection and I think that's where the cascade for us will be important. At the moment, you know if somebody has become an instructor or coach, we got a very hierarchical approach to, very vertical approach to what they can do once they've achieved that first level. That leads people to believe if they become an instructor or coach, the next step is then to become an instructor or coach educator. There is no clear understanding or separation of roles and it doesn't automatically follow that a good coach will make a good coach educator. (Harry, BC Head of Coaching)

Rhys commented:

I think, sports are having discussions, “Do we just stop calling the mums and dads, who we rely upon on weekends to do the job, do we stop calling them coaches because it’s unfairly burdening them with all the stuff? They might be doing a terrible job because they think coaches should be yelling and they think coaches need to win. Do we stop that and start calling them facilitators or enjoyment something?” So, I think that’s an issue that more broadly, is so poorly understood. How do Level 4 coaches fit in? Sometimes coaches misunderstand, the people employing and supporting coaches but definitely by the public. But if you start getting the people, who are involved with the award, in positions of influence, so boards, CEOs, whoever else are responsible for employing and supporting coaches ... They will then better understand what it is that Level 4 coaches do and valuing the kinds of background that allow people to do those jobs well, I think you would be in a better position. They can get a better picture of what quality coaching looks like, capture the scope, what can be reasonably attributable to a coach. Then you start opening up growing possibilities for those from diverse backgrounds, who could do a great job being considered for this work. (Rhys, HEi lecturer)

Upon reflection of my research experiences, I consider the comments by Susan, Harry, and Rhys exemplary of stakeholders, who recognised that although it was important for key individuals to re-evaluate perspectives, it was of further significance for the wider context (i.e. organisations) to support educators and managers. While I acknowledge that I set out in this sub-chapter to focus on the individuals in the context of the UKCC CL4 award, to me these do not exist in isolation from wider settings, in which individuals operate. I wish to demonstrate the key role of individuals in the context of my research, however, equally note their embeddedness in the organisational environments of sports coaching. To do so, I wish to allude to Cooley’s 1897 work on the interrelatedness between individuals and our social environments. The theorist noted that the nature and processes in our social surroundings shaped our individual conduct.

He wrote that

...every thought and every act guided by thought bears some relation to the social environment, past or present, and could not be the same if that were altogether different (Cooley, 1897:70).

The theorist continued to suggest that these situations would affect our actions in that we would tend to demonstrate the behaviours that we anticipated to be desirable by others in our surroundings. While Cooley recognised that we could not change this human nature, which would lead us to seek said approval, similar to his successors (e.g. Mead, 1934; Blumer, 1969; Strauss, 1959), the theorist considered us individuals capable of changing our conduct. In this vein, Cooley did not regard our desire for approval in itself as a problematic trait. Rather, he prompted that, when seeking support, it could be useful to engage with processes, situations and people, who would support our behaviours and thoughts.

In relation to what Susan, Harry, and Rhys suggested, I would then argue that the individual efforts of those, involved with the award were framed, and to some extent, impacted upon, by established opinions in coaching. The “messy” system that Susan referred to became apparent to me when I engaged with gatekeepers, who oversaw the UKCC CL4 award in different ways. At the time of my study, Nicole for instance, did not appear to be embedded in surroundings that would support her liaison officer duties beyond her pre-established conduct as an academic. Based on the diverse views and tensions that Harry and Rhys identified, I would argue that they recognised that those on the UKCC CL4 award hoped to find affirmation among like-minded coaches, educators, and managers. In further light of my reading of Cooley (1897), I offer that coach educators and other coach education managers, such as Evelyn, Theo, Tyler, or

Susan, whose recollections I alluded to in this chapter, could be considered as having evolved their own, “new” social environments that supported their efforts in the UKCC CL4 context. Their individual engagement with peers, who interpreted the award in comparable ways, led them to develop mutually understood views, which were embedded in wider social contexts where people with a whole variety of perspectives came together (Cooley, 1897).

Chapter 5 Part B. Interactions and the UKCC Coach Level 4 award

Introduction

Moving on, I will make sense of the diverse interpersonal encounters that, I suggest, imbued UKCC CL4 situations. To start, I will refer to the different “versions” that I recognised in my fieldwork on the BJA and BC UKCC CL4 award. I will lean on the work of Blumer (1969), Mead (1934) and notions of joint acts and acting units, which I considered at the core of shaping the nature of CL4 situations. I will argue that the diversities in award environments could be connected to the joining of GB-led coach education and HE delivery, two subworlds, which practices I considered intertwined in a novel social world on the UKCC CL4 award (Shibutani, 1955; Strauss, 1978).

Then, I will turn my attention to the interactions I considered relevant to coach learners and compare CL4 cohorts to reference groups, which were of value to participants when adapting to the demands of the UKCC CL4 award (Cooley, 1918; Shibutani, 1955). Based on my research experiences, I will argue further that the recurrent interactions in award situations created feelings of community, for which theoretical interpretation I will draw upon Cooley’s notions of social mind and social consciousness (Cooley, 1907).

In the latter section of this chapter, I will focus on the interactions between coach learners and coach educators, whose roles I will compare to those of learners (here: coach learners) and coaches (here: coach educators and HEi lecturers) that Strauss proposed in his 1959 text. I will end Part B with my contemplation of dialogues as underpinning the superior understandings that those involved with the UKCC CL4 award developed and the change that this could render (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934).

The various interpretations of the UKCC CL4 award

Throughout my fieldwork, I recognised that differences existed in the ways in which the BJA and the BC UKCC CL4 award were organised. Particularly in my research experiences on the BC UKCC CL4 award, I recognised a coach education course that was imbued with shared ownership and dedication of those, tasked with its organisation. In this regard, Harry, BC Head of Coaching at the time of my study, explained:

We wanted and needed the university to accredit the PG Dip level, but we wanted to remain actively involved in order that there was a separation between the academic and the Governing Body requirement of the Level 4. We ran interviews with five identified universities and eventually settled on Stirling. One of the reasons for it, at that stage, they had a more developed, outreach approach to deliver their Masters programme ... a potential cohort of Level 4 coaches, they'll be working full-time, be a freelance coach or might work for one of our national centres. So, all professional people. Time would be an issue and constraint, so we wanted them to be able to access learning in a range of different ways. In particular, without having to attend formal sessions at university. The attractiveness of Stirling was that they appeared to provide a mature student approach. (Harry, BC Head of Coaching)

It became apparent that Harry and his colleagues imprinted the award with delivery and assessment formats that they rendered important as a GB. The effort that they demonstrated did not only ensure that coaches felt supported on their learning journey, but transformed the award into an amicable experience. In place of formal lectures that would remind coaches and me of school and university days, we participated in interactive sessions during residential events. During the event that marked coaches' one-year engagement with the UKCC CL4 award, I observed a session, where I felt this occurred, and noted:

Lisa holds a recap session of the first year. She explains that she would like to revisit how this part went and how coaches could prepare for the second year. Lewis explains that, in the assignments he did, the support was very different.

Evelyn provided him with a timeline to work toward the assignment, but then in the following assignment, Lewis struggled because there was no guidance at all. It appears that Steve stepped in to support him in completing that assignment. Lisa asks whether coaches feel they receive the support they need, either through Stirling or fellow coaches. Colin says yes, suggesting that he would always have an open ear in Thomas [a coach, who completed the CL4 award with the cohort, one year ahead of Colin]. (Field notes written at Link Hotel Loughborough, May 2016)

The proactivity of key individuals on the BC UKCC CL4 award was further apparent when I observed sessions, during which Lisa, Evelyn, and Steve, all core members of the Level 4 Board, stepped forward to facilitate coach learning. As an example, I wrote the below research notes following a two-hour lecture delivered by a guest lecturer. Subsequent to a 30-minute break, Steve led a follow-up session to revisit the theoretical lecture content. I wrote:

Back in the conference room ... with Steve to discuss the session Oliver did. Steve recaps and tries to compare Oliver's session to other situations that may be easier to understand for the group. It is enjoyable to see how some of the coaches are engaged in the small group setting. Steve asks them to revisit the structure of Oliver's session. Nobody really picked up on that, so Steve makes an analogy to reading a paper step by step and gradually increasing the depth of reading. Nicely and smoothly, Steve bridges the initial question whether Oliver presented a theory and concludes that one could call it a sort of "formula". I notice that Steve has a great ability to pick up theoretical content and discuss it with the coaches. (Field notes taken in Gleneagles, Scotland, January 2016)

Such approaches to learning contrasted my experiences on the BJA UKCC CL4 award. On my first day in the research field, following my inquiry at two campus receptions and my eventual introduction to the cohort, I observed a session delivered by a HEi lecturer. Disappointed by the educator-led delivery, I wrote:

We are in a computer room with a big screen on the front wall. The coaches seem comfortable with each other, knowing each other for about one year. That's fine, but during the session, I cannot grasp as many interactions as I did with the other [BC CL4] cohort. There is no real invitation by the lecturer to do group work. Personally, I feel like I am back in university, on a Sport Science

degree, when I think about the content and setup of the lecture. (Field notes taken at Sheffield Hallam University, May 2015)

As the morning progressed, it was common for coaches to start private conversations, when the content appeared driven heavily by theory. After one or two hours, I noted:

So far, the Level 4 seems just another course to attend where coaches still follow their usual business, but also sit in a class for a couple of hours. I can see that coaches check emails or do things relevant to their work. Also, as far as I am aware, there is no planned social activity. (Field notes taken at Sheffield Hallam University, May 2015)

Afternoons were most difficult, due to the often-monotonous format of delivery that merely allowed time for informal discussions during coffee and lunch breaks. Even during pauses, conversations between coaches were not as frequent as I had expected. This was, I believe, because it was up to coaches to organise refreshments, and so, often, I watched learners “escape” the confining classroom, as soon as their break began. I saw the liaison officers rarely during the residential delivery, which is why it was difficult for me to discuss queries that related to the wider organisation of the BJA UKCC CL4 award. The majority of coaches’ and my contact during these days was with HEi lecturers, who delivered different modules of the award. Following my attendance at two BJA residential days, I continued to be uncertain about the roles and responsibilities in this environment. On the second of my first two days of my fieldwork on the BJA UKCC CL4 award, I wrote:

I am slightly confused with the organisation. I think that Nicole works for the university but there is (so far) nobody like Lisa in British Canoeing, who is there for the coaches all the time during the residential delivery days or represents the Judo, as a sport. Just someone, who is there to respond to questions and concerns. (Field notes taken at Sheffield Hallam University, May 2015)

On another occasion, I commented:

It almost seems there is a high split of responsibilities in this Level 4 [BC]. The “experts” come in and do their delivery on a variety of topics, but then people like Lisa or Steve deal with the wrap-up. ... And there’s the real difference between judo and canoeing: those, who are the organisation leads. The judo award is university-led, i.e. Nicole. The BC award is GB-led with input from the university, i.e. Lisa is the first contact, but actually Evelyn helps a lot too. Could these settings have as a consequence that the Level 4 residential days take place in different environments? ... I feel that it is really crucial that Lisa and Evelyn, (and surely Steve, who so often translates academia into sports coaching terms), engage a lot with each other and totally invest themselves in the award. Is that maybe why they are so good at engaging coaches? (Field notes written at Stirling Court Hotel, September 2016)

My participation in situations, such as those described above, led me to recognise that individuals, such as Lisa, Steve, and Evelyn, brought the social learning environments on the BC UKCC CL4 award to life by drawing together their expertise. By contrast, Nicole appeared alone in bridging the gap between understandings of the BJA and expectations of HEi staff.

In relation to this, I wish to allude to cooperative activity (Mead, 1934), joint acts and acting units (Blumer, 1969). According to Mead and, later, Blumer, such shared social actions would occur, if those, acting towards one another, shared two aspects; first, the situation, in which their behaviours took place, and secondly, their interpretations of this situation (Blumer, 1969). According to Mead (1934), we as individuals ought to evolve underpinning understandings about the purpose, nature and content of our engagement, if we desired to establish collaborative efforts. Blumer (1969:84) wrote further that the symbolic interactionist understanding of social action focused on ‘...acting individuals who fit their respective lines of action to one another...’. In doing so, these individuals would form acting units, which constituted of individual people or collectives, whose associates committed to achieving agreed endeavours. The theorist

noted that the members of acting units would develop shared understandings from previous experiences with particular situations. This would aid the establishment of common definitions and behaviours. These mutual understandings allowed us to act in similar ways. Yet, cooperative activity as Mead (1934) noted or joint acts are not something that individuals develop once in a particular way and hold onto in a set manner. Rather, Blumer (1969:86) wrote that ‘...the actions of participating people are constructed by them through a process of interpretation’. According to Mead (1934), it was important to commit to recurrent consideration of the ways in which we interact to create an attentiveness to the actions of others and ourselves. In turn, these would inform our subsequent encounters with others.

In the context of my study, I recognised that individuals, such as Steve, Lisa, Evelyn and Harry, have aligned the ways in which they think and act towards one another and coach learners. I believe that they developed an acting unit in the location of the BC UKCC CL4 award. To this end, I suggest that the establishment of the Level 4 Board was crucial, comprising of staff from BC and UoS. Lisa, Steve, and Evelyn, who represented core members of this group, met on regular occurrences to discuss current award-related matters, its continuous development and the progress of coach learners, who completed the award. In a symbolic interactionist sense, however, the experiences they shared did not lead to automatic behaviours. Rather, Lisa and her colleagues were actively interpreting their own and each other’s thoughts and behaviours. This, they demonstrated in recurrent ‘...acts to meet the situations in which they are placed’, such as the planning, delivery and assessment of award modules, queries from coach learners, or regulations set by scUK (Blumer, 1969:85). To accomplish this, I suggest that they aligned their thinking and acting, while drawing on their distinct skills in

relation to such matters. By contrast, I felt unsuccessful in my attempts to determine whether an acting unit existed on the BJA UKCC CL4 award, similar to that Lisa and her colleagues developed. In contrast to continuous dialogues, which I observed on the BC UKCC CL4 award, I recognised a lack of joint action in the field of the BJA UKCC CL4 award (Blumer, 1969). Indeed, it seemed that Nicole committed to the organisation and management of the BJA UKCC CL4 award without seeming to have developed shared understandings with staff from the BJA, whose involvement was rare during my fieldwork. It was obvious that there was limited support around Nicole to evolve not only situational adaptations to award-related responsibilities, but also act upon shared understandings.

In retrospect of my fieldwork, I believe that one of the barriers to creating mutual understandings could be related to the merging of formal coach education with HE study at UK postgraduate level 7. As an example, Susan, who had an understanding of the ways in which GBs and HEIs tend to operate, recognised that different practices were brought together for the purpose of the UKCC CL4 award. She said:

I think it was necessary. I don't think we could have continued doing what we were doing without it. Sports would have stalled, they would have lost a lot of coaches. They've been doing this a certain way, which has not changed. It often seems outdated. It's miles away from what happens in the research-driven world of HE. I don't think the system would have been sustainable without HE. ... It's that academic research that is useful to us from a practitioner perspective. But equally, it's a very different system. I think we need to continue aligning those two as we go along, so that we can move coaching forward.
(Susan, scUK coach education manager)

Tyler, who also delivered on the UKCC CL4 award, voiced his thoughts as follows:

There is greater up-to-date knowledge and expertise in specific areas in universities and that might be important for educating coaches. For example, within sport science, coaches can gain greater knowledge ... from individuals across universities, who could be national or international experts in those

areas, who might not necessarily consult with Governing Bodies. Leading researchers in their area but they might not be doing applied work. [With the UKCC CL4 award], it means that those coaches get to access knowledge from those individuals, who they might not otherwise get the information. Otherwise, I think Governing Bodies tend to keep to themselves, operating according to standards they set ... without anyone looking in. (Tyler, HEi lecturer)

Ryan, a coach, who completed the award at the time of my study, iterated that the academic provision by HEIs would complement the sport-specific knowledge his GB has offered to date:

The thing is with the Governing Body, they know the sport inside out. It's what they're good at. The university lecturers, that's where a lot of research occurs and you know, there's a lot of theoretical and practical knowledge ... So, I think that there is an integration of academia and research with the UKCC CL4 award. I get that it's challenging, but for sports to stay up to date, it's essential to partner with universities. For me personally it's a good mould, definitely. (Ryan, coach learner)

To Tyler, who taught on the BJA UKCC CL4 award, it became apparent how divergent from coach education some practitioners must perceive the postgraduate study, when he noticed that a group of coach learners had ended their learning journey after the first of two years on the course. He explained:

Last year, we had 15 coaches, half of whom were paid by their Governing Body to attend the course. The second year of that cohort, only half of them came back. ...A number of coaches, who haven't come back were funded, strongly encouraged by their Governing Bodies to attend these courses [the UKCC CL4 award]. Obviously, they didn't have the motivation to continue to buy into the postgraduate course. It's complete different from what they would have done previously. ...So, I think it's important for coaches intrinsically to want to go on these courses. (Tyler, HEi lecturer)

Cath, a HEi lecturer, did not feel that the conduct of GBs was thoroughly interweaved with the scientific practices that universities would follow. She said:

I think the idea is good. I struggle to see where this collaboration [between GB and HEi] exists in a lot of cases. I think there are a lot of universities that have seen this as a way to get people for their programmes, have gone out and have

done a very good job in some cases with some Governing Bodies. But I'm not entirely sure that I would say there's this collaboration in the wider sense that I would understand it. They're still doing their separate things. HEIs promote research and academic study. GBs do what they have been doing all along. (Cath, HEI lecturer)

By contrast, from his perspective as BC Head of Coaching, Harry commented:

In a way we were quite excited about that [working with a university], in as much as, it obviously introduced that academic aspect. With the introductions of the level 1, 2, 3, we've always had challenges with an audience, who didn't actually see an academic aspect to coaching. ... So we were excited about the opportunities that the Level 4 might initiate for providers. If we were able, through the introduction of the Level 4, to get some of our more experienced coaches to recognise the potential of linking theory to practice and then really seeing that there is a value to introducing a level of academic perspective down to the other levels. We saw that as being a potential win and excitement. So far, touch wood, it seems to be working. (Harry, BC Head of Coaching)

In consideration of the diverse perspectives that the stakeholders, who participated in my study, associated with GBs and HEIs, I wish to allude to the concept of social worlds that Shibutani (1955) and Strauss (Strauss, 1978; 1982; 1984) used in their writing.

Strauss (1978) argued that social worlds enabled process-orientated discussions of social life as well as a consideration of structural features. The theorist described a social world as a set of mutual actions and considerations, which people communicate with one another (Shibutani, 1955; Strauss, 1982).

Strauss explained that each social world had a minimum of one primary activity, which was pursued alongside other related behaviours. At its outset, Strauss wrote that '...there may be only temporary divisions of labor...' in a social world, however, over time, organisations would evolve, which facilitated the management of existing and evolving of new activities (Strauss, 1978:122). Strauss portrayed his understanding of social life as fluid and changing, emphasising that individuals would move between and contribute to more than one social world at the same moment in time (e.g. Blumer,

1969; Cooley, 1918; Mead, 1934). These processes were shaped by the symbolic meanings, which us individuals defined in connection to the things and processes in our surroundings (Blumer, 1969). Strauss suggested that social worlds would intersect under various circumstances and wrote in this relation:

When services are needed, technology is borrowed and technical skills are taught and learned. When other worlds impinge (as when worldly action is questioned as harmful or illegitimate or inappropriate) alliances are deemed useful. Thus, a major analytic task is to discover such intersecting and to trace the associated processes, strategies and consequences (Strauss, 1978:122-123).

This intersection involved close analysis of components of a social world and often led to segmenting, which entail the dissolving of social worlds into smaller subworlds. This, Strauss considered never-ending in his process-orientated view of social life. He clarified, however, that intersections would not occur between global worlds, rather, their segments (i.e. subworlds) and ‘...signifies [signify] not only new activities, sites, technologies, and organizations, but also ... new universes of discourse’ (Strauss, 1978:123). Individuals would use arenas as spaces of communication to establish common understandings, negotiate responsibilities and identify mutual responses from interactive processes (Blumer, 1969; Shibutani, 1955; Wiener, 1991). In a symbolic interactionist sense, these interactions extended beyond mere stimulus-and-response mechanisms. Rather, we would develop symbolic meanings when interpreting our own and others’ behaviours, which would then inform our conduct in social interactions (Blumer, 1969).

In the context of my study, I would consider the formerly GB-led environments of coach education and HE settings as two subworlds, intersected through the establishment of the UKCC CL4 award. This could be considered a new social world

(Strauss, 1978). Several participants in my study, such as Ryan, Tyler and Susan, appeared to have recognised the significance of the UKCC CL4 award to their professional lives, as a qualification that merged GB-led coach education with HE-level study. I suggest that they participated in interactive processes to create and develop understandings in the arenas of the CL4 award (Blumer, 1969). This was similar to Harry's opinions, which, I would relate to his involvement in BC, a GB that I believe succeeded to develop a format of the UKCC CL4 award in collaboration with UoS, which was inclusive of research practice found at HE as well as embedded practitioner knowledge.

I recognised from my fieldwork on the BJA and BC UKCC CL4 award, however, that the development of new behaviours, associations, and discourses represented dynamic processes (Strauss, 1978). Indeed, Strauss (1959) acknowledged that our course of action in any unfamiliar environment would not change in a linear fashion. The UKCC CL4 award could be viewed one such development, which Cath, for instance, recognised as a slow and complex process (Townsend and Cushion, 2017). It appeared that some practitioners, such as the group that Tyler referred to in our interview conversation, did not seem prepared to intersect research-informed thinking found on the UKCC CL4 award with their longstanding practices. Similar to practitioners in studies by Jones and Allison (2014) and Townsend and Cushion (2017), their seeming belief that the nature of taught content on the UKCC CL4 award differed from engrained opinions hindered these coaches to be open about the value that postgraduate study could render to existing understandings (Strauss, 1959). In a symbolic interactionist sense, I propose that the conflicts inherent in coaches' interpretations of the new social world led some of them to retreat into their existing

subworlds and suspend their studies (Blumer, 1969; Strauss, 1959). I consider such resistance challenging for a wider implementation of the UKCC CL4 award across sports and recognise in consideration of Cath's perspective that the intersecting of subworlds represented a process that could be considered irregular and embedded in the idiosyncratic nature of human interaction (Blumer, 1962; Strauss, 1959).

Being part of the UKCC CL4 award feels like belonging to a community

The more time I spent in my research field, the more I recognised that the recurrent immersion of coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers in situations of the UKCC CL4 award created a bond between them. It seemed of value to stakeholders, particularly practitioners, to belong to a group of likeminded individuals. As an example, Liam described, who was completing the UKCC CL4 award at the time of my study:

There's no pressure to not ask questions. There's an encouraging situation to try and get students to ask questions to foster a consent that you consume as your peers. The communities of practice within the paddlesports have been excellent, that's what I've taken away from it. ... It's, like I said, there's a community. I think there's a number of coaches, who will actively engage with each other and there's those, who won't, which is fine. I would like to think that I would stay involved with the programme to a certain extent. Whatever that means, I'm not sure yet. (Liam, coach learner)

I felt that Grace voiced her perceptions in similar ways when she said:

Since I've gone onto my level four I'd say that the face to face days are almost prompt and confidence boosts in some ways. You're in a room with people who're on the same page. Particularly when you're back at the club and feel like you're completely on a different page to everybody else, that's quite nice. You go into a room with likeminded people [on L4], who understand what you're talking about, but also it's quite a personal thing ... Now it's streams of consciousness, really analysing why I do the things that I do. It's almost like therapy in some ways and I know that other coaches have said they've had these lightbulb moments during their level four. (Grace, UKCC CL4 coach)

Indeed, inviting atmospheres and a sense of community shaped my research experiences too. After six months of fieldwork, I felt comfortable and relaxed when I was around the BC UKCC CL4 cohort. Coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers were easy to approach. I jotted:

It was again familiar, very family-like and they really create this community among coaches ... I mean, it includes me too. I am involved in all the emails that

relate to the upcoming residential days and questions that relate to my arrival, accommodation, meals I would be involved with ... Whenever I arrive at the residential delivery event, everyone greets me, people ask about my research. They ask how life is treating me. We talk about the content, assessments, and other challenges and opportunities over coffee and meal times. I mean, on days before travelling I feel so nervous, but that's who I am, I guess. My research environment is so welcoming. Once I get to my data collection site and see everyone again, I am good. (Reflexive notes, audio-recorded at Duchally Estate in Gleneagles, Scotland, September 2015)

It took me longer to feel this way on the BJA UKCC CL4 award. Yet, with the increasing time I spent in this field, I felt that coach learners and educators considered me a familiar face. I, too, seemed more relaxed during residential events with the increasing number of days spent in this research field. On one occasion, I was about nine months into my fieldwork, I wrote:

We are back in the first room [where sessions took place this morning]. Tyler [a HEi lecturer] and I spoke about his PhD on organisational stress in sport. Coaches returned from their break too. One of them, wearing a black GB World Cup t-shirt today, said, "*Are we all doing alright?*" I smiled and led small talk with him and others. Last year, I felt so uncomfortable when I started working with judo. Now, I am certainly more confident with fieldwork in general. But also, I started my research on the BJA CL4 award on a biomechanics module, which was very much lecture-like and then the first HEi lecturer, whom I met on my first day in the field, had no idea that I would be tagging along. That didn't help. Anyway, situations, like this casual chat earlier, make me feel very welcome. I don't worry about my attendance anymore. I am part of this group now. (Field notes taken at Sheffield Hallam University, January 2016)

The feelings of belonging and community that I recognised in environments of the UKCC CL4 award could be related to the concept of reference groups (Shibutani, 1955; Strauss, 1959; 1978). Shibutani (1955:562) theorised that reference groups represented clusters of people '...to which an actor is related in some manner and the norms and values shared in that group'. Reference groups would act as anchoring points when us individuals, as their members, aimed to appraise, interpret, and structure perceptions, associated with our social environments. Similar to symbolic

interactionist interpretations of social life by Blumer (1969) and Strauss (1969; 1978; 1982), Shibutani (1955) emphasised that reference groups were related to the often-diverse ways in which we, as social actors, organised our experiences.

Strauss (1959:154) considered at the heart of this the ‘...symbolic character...’ of membership in reference groups, where we would ‘...learn, and develop, certain terminologies’. Strauss (1982) continued to theorise that the members of a reference group would develop mutually agreed ways to interpret social situations, objectives for their grouping, and boundaries to other social clusters. Notwithstanding, some deviation from agreed thoughts and behaviours was natural. Strauss considered this at the heart of how we conducted ourselves as active agents in the social world. Strauss (1982) proposed that only if a group member acted recurrently outside the boundaries of what was mutually understood, this would hold the potential to initiate a gradual separation into a new grouping. Indeed, while it was unrealistic to expect precise repetition of activities, Strauss argued that as members of a reference group, we would continuously engage in somewhat similar ways of action and interaction. This, he described as the process of theorization (Strauss, 1982).

Over the course of my fieldwork, I noticed that award-related conversations appeared to represent a somewhat anchoring point for practitioners, educators, and managers. On regular occasion, they would meet during residential events, discuss matters that occurred in relation to previously taught content and assessments, but also share experiences with coaching that took place outside the immediate environments of the award. In line with Strauss’ (1982) theorisation, I offer that the recurrent interactions in UKCC CL4 environments, led coaches, as an example to develop mutually understood assumptions. For instance, Grace voiced that she drew on dialogues with

others on the award, not only to share her experiences, but also to develop agreed approaches to situations in coaching practice (Shibutani, 1955). In further relation to her and Liam's comments, I propose that practitioners viewed themselves as social agents on the UKCC CL4 award, who established a closed community of coach learners, who thought alike (Strauss, 1982). To some extent, the award came to be a social frame of reference for me too, from interactions with coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers. My recurrent immersion in residential events led me to develop mutual understandings with coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers. From conversations with them about the importance of networking and using research-informed understandings, I developed a certain view of those, who were involved in the UKCC CL4 award, as well as those, who did not see value in engaging with this format of coach education. I believe that the shared thinking that coach learners developed as a reference group in relation to postgraduate study and coaching practice strengthened the bond in CL4 cohorts, while distancing them as groups from those, who held on to longstanding and, perhaps, outdated assumptions (Shibutani, 1955; Strauss, 1978).

In relation to the CL4 cohorts as reference groups, I wish to revisit the meanings of interpersonal situations to coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers. Unquestionably, stakeholders considered their experiences in terms of their own, individual circumstances. Further to this, however, I noticed that it was valuable to stakeholders to interact with one another when engaging with situations on the UKCC CL4 award. Toni described:

I prefer that classroom environment, being with other coaches. If you ask me to do it alone at home with my busy time, I probably wouldn't get it done. When I sit in a room with others for two days, it's much better for me. I'm sure there's

people who would say, "Oh I would prefer to do this online." That's fine. But I think when you miss the interaction with people, with teachers, you miss the, "Wait a minute, let me ask a question. Is this going to help my understanding? Could you clarify this? How does someone else think about that?" I can't do that without a group. Because it's about these relationships, it all comes back to relationships. (Toni, coach learner)

Noah, another coach learner, said during one of our conversations:

I've been to university before and what I kind of remember, although it was a really long time ago, the lecturers at the time, I suppose, ... were just like, "Here's the material. Off you go." With no interaction. This is much better on this course [UKCC CL4 award]. I don't know whether it's the classes that are smaller than before or the lecturers do things differently but I found there was a lot more interaction and conversation about the different topics than just their delivery... I quite liked that because that kind of really helped me to see whether I understand the concepts or not. Probe what others think about them. (Noah, coach learner)

The pleasure that practitioners seemed to gain from "connecting" with others on the course was recognised by coach educators too. Tyler, a HEi lecturer on the BJA UKCC CL4 award explained:

Just this last year, we were having a discussion and one of the coaches goes, "You should setup a coaching network or coaching union." Whereby, it is something online where you can communicate on a regular basis. Coaches were finding the discussions so beneficial when they were talking about issues in their Governing Bodies or issues within coaching practice in connection to the content we discussed. This is almost a point of recommendation for future coach education, I think. Within coach education programmes, it's something that should either be lightly or strongly encouraged to get coaches to start a network where they can communicate more regularly because I think it's very important as a mentoring or support base for them. I think it helps coaches become who they want to be or just in general advance their perspectives. (Tyler, HEi lecturer)

In further connection to this, Lisa said:

I think the content of what's being studied, the support they get and the learning environment when they come together for the residentials [are important]. It is very unique for coaches to step out of their normal world and go into a learning environment with other people who have other, sort of, similar experiences to share with. It's kind of a real privilege for them to sit

down for a couple of days and really do learning for themselves with a group of people that are perhaps unknown to them but share that learning experience. I think that's really powerful to practitioners, to help them develop in their particular areas of interest. (Lisa, BC Level 4 Programme Director)

Having recognised the value that those involved with the UKCC CL4 award identified from recurrent dialogues among coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers, George, coach education manager at scUK, proposed the creation of a network that enabled practitioners to interact and share thoughts freely across sports (Mallett and Dickens, 2009). He voiced his thoughts in the following way:

We are looking at how we can create a wider network to support these individuals [CL4 coaches]. Everything is still very much remote or distance learning, but with Skype, we can have conversations and support there... I think creating this network is a good phrase. This kind of alumni [society] that you can actually work together as a unit. Let's say, a lacrosse coach can learn from a handball coach but it is making those connections. I would like to see some event for those sports, that got small cohorts, where you can actually sit in a room together and you can say, "Oh I know this problem. I know that problem. I can do this myself now". (George, scUK coach education manager)

It seemed that coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers considered it integral to the development of practitioners to engage with others, who were involved in the UKCC CL4 award. To make sense of the value of social encounters, I wish to refer to Cooley's 1907 writing on social mind. In line with symbolic interactionist theorisation, Cooley assumed that our thoughts do not exist in isolation from others; rather he proposed that they would be intertwined with the social processes we contribute to. Indeed, by considering not only our own conduct, but also the behaviours of others, we would develop social consciousness, a sensation that the theorist regarded '...inseparable from [our] self-consciousness...' (Cooley, 1907:676). In this respect, I believe that Cooley aimed to portray the interconnectedness between "the individual" and "the social", while rejecting the isolated view of a self that existed

without reference to those things in our surroundings. Our engagement in self-reflection, however, would continue to encompass an integral part of our thought processes. According to Cooley (1907:678), this would occur as sympathetic introspection, during which we put ourselves ‘...into intimate contact with various sorts of persons...’ whose suggestions we internalised to understand better how others thought. This, so the theorist suggested, would feed into the continuous development of understanding our social self.

To contextualise this with my research, I offer that practitioners, such as Toni and Noah, engaged in processes of sympathetic introspection when contemplating their opinions of different learning environments. As became apparent in Noah’s comments, I believe that he had drawn on his experiences with different individuals in HE to make sense of the conduct of others and to firm his interpretations of their behaviours. I recognise that Noah valued conversing with knowledgeable others, which, he felt, enabled him to firm his research-informed understandings. With this, I propose that coaches, such as Noah, developed a sense of social consciousness (Cooley, 1907).

I suggest also that educators and managers developed similar social consciousness when echoing practitioner views on the value of interpersonal encounters. Based on my interpretation of comments by Tyler, Lisa and George, I believe that their comments on practitioner networks appeared to point towards a recognition among educators and managers that coaches’ sharing of understandings in interpersonal encounters would lead to the development of a social mind (Cooley, 1907).

Interpreting Cooley’s suggestions further, I propose that coaches were seen to develop their understandings of self by balancing views developed from their social consciousness with individual processes of sympathetic introspection.

The importance of dialogues

I suggest that the recurrent conversations between coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers were significant to shaping various processes, related to the UKCC CL4 award, from its establishment to perceived learning. In this vein, Evelyn, HEi lecturer and core member on the BC Level 4 Board, placed particular importance on those dialogues that occurred face-to-face. She said:

Well, I think that the residential session we have are absolutely invaluable for the programme. Without those, because our programme is a distance programme, without those, we wouldn't have the same impact that we do... . And, so the recommendation is that that continues and the same with the close collaboration with the people in British Canoeing, so Lisa, Harry. You know, those relationships are really important. So, again, that's a recommendation more to continue. (Evelyn, HEi lecturer)

In relation to this, Brooke, a coach educator, explained the following, when we spoke about taught sessions that occurred during the residential delivery days:

I'm hugely in favour coaches understanding and having a look at a framework that they can then challenge ... I guess within our own group of people that we talk about a lot, is again to a state of praxis between theory and practice. And to interact and to be synergistic, that sounds perfect to me. But just telling the coach what a theory is, which is sometimes what tends to happen at times, isn't working I think. At least from what I have seen. It needs to go two ways [between educators and coach learners]. (Brooke, freelance coach educator)

Colin, who spoke openly about the fears he had formerly associated with formal educational settings, seemed hopeful when he voiced his perceptions of the first residential event on the BC UKCC CL4 award:

We've come in contact with one [coach educator] so far, and ... I was expecting quite a daunting environment and it actually really wasn't. It was quite relaxed and open and trying to gain all the information from us, so yeah, not what I was expecting. That's tapped into how I learn and made me wanna really get hold of this, which is really good so yeah hopefully that will continue across the tutors, across the people who run it. (Colin, coach learner)

Although such instances were less frequent on the BJA UKCC CL4 award, as I have revealed earlier in this chapter, when practitioners were invited to engage in instances of, what I would call social learning, such as discussions or peer conversations, I felt that they thrived. They immersed themselves into delivered content, shared openly and extensively their ideas as to how theory could inform coaching practice. On one such occasion, I commented:

Today, I can observe the shared language and knowledge through the interactions in the group. This module brings out the nicely that the judo group, as a cohort, is as engaging when it comes to the sport-related interactions as paddle sports, however, they are less fortunate with the layout of the Level 4 modules. Theo's part will definitely have an influence that will be perceived as valuable to the coaches. He seems to have thought about the best way to apply science to areas that are relevant to coaches. (Field notes taken at Sheffield Hallam University, September 2015)

In relation to such instances, Ryan, whose previous experiences with HE had no resemblance with the informal engagements he enjoyed with peers on the BJA UKCC CL4 award, felt prompted to contribute to discussions in classroom environments:

I went to uni from '95-'99. Big lecture theatres, big classes, the arrangement of the lectures was set like the lecturer almost always far away from you. It felt very impersonal. But what I like about this course, and it might have been the numbers, it might have been the rooms, it might have been the styles the lecturers used ... but it just tends to sort of be a lot more interactive. I have felt that you were encouraged to ask questions as opposed to someone who's sitting there, hearing information. I think that environment did definitely very well in creating that [discussions, interactions]. (Ryan, coach learner)

To create such environments, Michael, who supported Susan and George in managing the UKCC CL4 award on behalf of scUK, voiced a clear idea of the conduct he expected educators to demonstrate. During one of our conversations, he explained:

I think they need to have real subject matter expertise on level 4, whatever that topic is they're coming to deliver. They need to be seen as extremely incredible specialists by the level 4 coaches. And they also need really good facilitations

skills and know how to deliver ... So, you need have real cutting edge, contemporary knowledge for your subject area and then you need the skills to do social learning through communities of practice, small group discussion, reflection, self-analysis and actually do that as well. (Michael, scUK coach education manager)

In a similar vein, Theo, a HEi lecturer, admitted:

If we spent a bit more time learning about coaches and their sport ... It's all good, delivering a workshop, but I think you need to ... tailor the information. We talk a lot about coaches but I think that training needs to be given to the people that deliver it. I think, if you wanna bridge the gap between science and practice and if you want the coaches to have a good experience, you also got to upskill the staff... . Maybe have a two-way process, so coaches educate the people delivering about their sport and that could be used then to deliver the information. At the moment, ... I feel like the coaches come, get the course delivered, they go away, write an assignment and that's it. I don't think there's a real two-way process. (Theo, HEi lecturer)

Rick, who completed the UKCC CL4 award at the time of my study, echoed this and voiced his thoughts in the following way:

Some have been better than others. Particularly Paul, who's our psychology guy, he's very relatable. He makes it very applied, you take it on board and you enjoy being in the lecture and then other lectures ... The biomechanics lecture for example, I studied it before, thankfully, but it was hard work. It was very physics oriented, which felt tedious ... So it's making it relatable in the lectures, which is good. (Rick, coach learner)

It could be suggested in this connection that stakeholders understood the UKCC CL4 award as an opportunity to develop social learning environments through one-to-one conversations and group discussions within the settings of formal coach education. In particular, those, who delivered and assessed course modules, were considered important to generating such lively surroundings.

From a theoretical perspective, the interpersonal encounters between educators and practitioners on the UKCC CL4 award could be related to the process of coaching and subsequent coaching relationships that Strauss presented in his 1959 work. I am aware

of the confusion that the terminological similarity with the sports coaching context might render here, however, I hope to achieve clarity for the reader by restating in my interpretations, which stakeholders assumed which roles, in the context of Strauss' theorisation. Strauss understood the coaching relationship as a process between a "coach" (e.g. an educator), who guided a learner as they moved along a series of steps to develop certain skills. In a symbolic interactionist sense, the coach and the learner were regarded active agents (e.g. Blumer, 1969; Cooley, 1918; Mead, 1934; Strauss, 1959). Strauss (1959) wrote that the coach would facilitate learning by engaging the learner in different tasks depending on individual needs. To aid the development of learners as individuals, the coach would balance the use prescriptions, guidance and challenges as well as the schedule of these processes.

As the learner progressed, so Strauss (1959:113) argued, they would acquire '...new skills or new perspectives, [which] can be counted upon to engage with other persons in new interactions'. Throughout the interactions with learners, however, Strauss deemed it the responsibility of the coach to recognise when and how to challenge, facilitate and guide more or less firmly the learner's thinking. Here, similar to Cooley (1902) and Mead (1934), the theorist commented that it might be necessary for learners to act first (e.g. try to find an example to a theoretical concept) in order to recognise their ability levels. Although coaches were noted to understand the products of learners' experiences (e.g. the PG Dip as an outcome of award completion), Strauss stipulated that the individual steps of progression were not predictable. Accordingly, neither coaches nor learners would be able to anticipate the distinct phases of learning and their meanings until they were immersed in the processes of their coaching relationship. To this end, Strauss commented that coaches might want to challenge

learners beyond feelings of comfort to expose alternative insights and potential for further development. He wrote in this connection:

The coach has to know when to force his man over a hurdle, and when to let him sidle up to it; when to schedule definite moves, and when to allow a period of relative free play (Strauss, 1959:114-115).

Throughout this, it was the learner's responsibility to themselves to appraise the behaviours of and interactions with their coach. Indeed, Strauss (1959) rejected the idea that the learner would resemble a *tabula rasa* when they commenced their learning journey. Rather, the theorist assumed that the coach would need to establish existing understandings to challenge and build on these. Then, they should support learners in developing new perspectives. Strauss (1959:119) drew on the image of '...a tree with many branches and twigs...' to visualise his view of the coaching relationship, where learners did not follow linear progression. Rather, they would hold on to beliefs until they came to understand alternatives, the grasping of which the coach was expected to facilitate in individually bespoke directions.

In relation to my study, I wish to first explain that I will allude to those, who taught on the UKCC CL4 award (i.e. coach educators and HEi lecturers) as coaches and those, who completed the award (i.e. practitioners) as learners to avoid any confusion in my interpretation of Strauss' writing. Although Theo, for instance, felt that HEi lecturers could do more to engage learners in what could be described in light of Strauss (1959) work as coaching relationships, I suggest that practitioners had recognised already few instances where coaching had occurred (Strauss, 1959). In light of comments by Evelyn, Brooke, Ryan, and Colin as well as my field notes, I believe that this took place when HEi lecturers facilitated social learning by initiating interpersonal encounters

with and among learners. In line with my interpretations of Strauss (1959), then, I postulate that the coach educators and HEi lecturers in my study, embodied pivotal figures in creating coaching relationships with learners, in which they challenged practitioner understandings while facilitating individual development. Based on my research experiences I suggest that recurrent instances of this aided practitioners to implement theory in sporting contexts. In turn, this was useful for practitioners to evolve more mature, independent research-informed solutions, which shaped their feelings of competence and confidence (Strauss, 1959).

From suggestions by educators and managers, such as Michael and Theo, I would argue what was deemed significant were educators' interpretations of learning that extended beyond a view of it as mere knowledge acquisition. Indeed, since both coaches and learners were considered active agents in a symbolic interactionist view of social life, I suggest that it could be seen of equal importance for educators to reconsider existing assumptions, as it was for learners to commit to resolving novel questions or existing queries in new, research-informed ways (Strauss, 1959).

In continuation of my discussion of dialogues, I wish to allude to those interpersonal experiences that occurred outside delivery and assessment environments of the UKCC CL4 award. In this vein, I suggest that Susan took it upon herself to create open atmospheres when she supported GBs and HEis in developing and implementing the UKCC CL4 award. She said:

We don't know an awful lot about it [processes that led to award establishment] ... Because there is some sensitive information around it... . It's very vague. It was postgraduate in nature and I spent some time reviewing the material that I could get my hands on and then work from there. Basically, all I did was to get people together, get to know what they wanted, see whether we have what they wanted and then we went from there. I just had and have to keep on the ball continuously. Always keeping in touch, almost trying to

anticipate what questions they [stakeholders in GBs and HEIs] might ask.
(Susan, scUK coach education manager)

In spite of the resistance that Susan encountered in some conversations with those, involved in GBs and HEIs, throughout my fieldwork, she committed to breaking such barriers. On one occasion, Susan commented:

I don't think I would change the level 4. I think I would try and change people's perception. We're fortunate to offer a massive variety of options for coaches in coach development. We have an individualised route through the programme. I think if people would stop having the perception that it's too time consuming, too expensive ... it's not the programme itself. So, I don't think I'd change it. I think I would change the people. (Susan, scUK coach education manager)

Some practitioners had completed such individualised routes. Indeed, I felt privileged to receive insight into practitioner perceptions at various stages of award completion. For instance, Steve found himself at a point, where he had completed the UKCC CL4 award. He seemed excited when we spoke about how he informed his work with athletes in light of “new” perspectives. He voiced his perceptions as follows:

It's certainly given me a fresh enthusiasm for coaching and even though some of the stuff I'm doing is pretty basic but actually it's quite exciting to think about that basic stuff through a Level 4 lens in terms of what it is you're establishing for people. Then, it's massively exciting because potentially I have an 8-year contact with athletes, which is more than most educators in schools have. I potentially have a significant impact on these young people's personal development, so I think the mind set stuff particularly, and those concepts are really important to young people even if they don't become great slalom athletes. I would like to think that they leave with a much more rounded sense of themselves than they otherwise might have ... because how [informed by academically informed knowledge gained from UKCC CL4 award] I have approached my work with them. (Steve, BC coach educator, UKCC CL4 coach)

To Harry it was important to cascade into various environments, the understandings gained from the academic study he saw on the UKCC CL4 award. He said:

It's not gonna be a quick win, but where I think it will be a win is the cascading that will happen. ... A challenge will be to make sure that the learning, the

reshaping of the thinking of the individuals who are taking the programme can cascade down into coach education. Just as much it's hopefully gonna impact on their own coaching but also we need to make sure it cascade down into the coach education process. So that it becomes a bit more accepted, not so much on Level 4 but on Level 3 that we need to find a marriage between the practical and academic. (Harry, BC Head of Coaching)

At the time of my study, Evelyn conveyed that she had already recognised changes in coaches' practice. She conveyed:

I can think of examples of some coaches who said the language they use is different and almost as a consequence of that, people are paying more attention to what they say. ... That's a positive effect on coaches themselves. I also think that the coaches, who have been through the programme so far are quite active in their own sporting community. So the coach education is not just seen in how they coach, but it's dispersed or disseminated into coaches that they work with or colleagues. So I think that there's a wider impact than just the individual coach. (Evelyn, HEi lecturer)

In consideration of the abovementioned perspectives, I would argue that coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers recognised the importance of interactions when referring to processes they associated with the UKCC CL4 award (e.g. Steve draws on his learning when interacting with athletes; Harry envisages that interpersonal encounters will support the cascading of research-informed knowledge).

Here, I wish to allude to Mead's (1934) notion of superior understandings and Blumer's (1969) writing on change which, I would argue, both theorists considered to occur in social environments. Mead extended his theorisation of self in that he argued that we as individuals demonstrated our "selves" to others, writing '...since it is a social self, it is a self that is realized in its relationship to others' (Mead, 1934:204). This was of particular importance when we aimed to portray so-called superior understandings, which encompass abilities that distinguish us from others. We would display these in our behaviours and articulation of our thoughts. While this was important to us, Mead

pointed out that our search for such superiority did not imply attempts to devalue how others conducted themselves. Rather, it is my understanding that the theorist aimed to portray that we would demonstrate superior understandings to assert ourselves of our own understandings (Mead, 1934). I wish to allude to the following extract in Mead's 1934 collection of essays to clarify what was meant here; the theorist wrote that the superior understandings we portrayed comprised

...a superiority he [the individual] makes use of. And when he does actually make use of it in the very community to which he belongs it loses that element of egoism which we think of when we think of a person simply pluming himself on his superiority over somebody else. ... When the sense of superiority goes over into a functional expression, then ...it is the way in which the individuals do change situations in which they live (Mead, 1934:208).

This view could be compared to Blumer's social interpretation of change. The theorist considered this not only embedded in behaviours of those, who act in different ways, but also in the interpretations of others, who see, appraise and respond to this. These perceptions, however, were not set by predetermined conditions. Rather they '...depend on what is taken into account and assessed in the actual situations in which behavior is formed' (Blumer, 1969:89). Indeed, according to Blumer, our views depend on the meanings we associate with behaviours in the particular situation *in situ*.

To contextualise this with my study findings, I would argue that stakeholders voiced certain aspects in interactions with others in order to demonstrate the changes that occurred in relation to the UKCC CL4. Talking to Susan, I suggest that she was keen to speak about the individualised learning journeys in her conversations with GBs and HEIs to convince them of the progressive changes that the involvement in the award would render. Similar to this, Harry and Evelyn deemed the ongoing dialogues with peer practitioners integral to sharing the insights coaches developed on the award.

Indeed, I suggest that this was apparent further in Steve's comments that related to his day-to-day work with athletes. In a symbolic interactionist sense, I propose that the different interpersonal instances represented opportunities for coaches, educators, and managers to demonstrate "new" understandings gained from the UKCC CL4 award or, what Mead (1934) would term, superior understandings. With this, I believe that coaches, educators, and managers in my study identified opportunities to portray to others the change that processes and outcomes of the UKCC CL4 award rendered. In line with Blumer (1969) and Mead (1934), it could be noted here that this was important to begin disseminating their superior understanding in the environments of sports coaching that lay outside the UKCC CL4 award.

Chapter 5 Part C. Wider contexts and the UKCC Coach Level 4 award

Introduction

In the final part of my findings and discussions, I will make sense of the research experiences I considered in relation to wider social environments surrounding the UKCC CL4 award. Beginning with a discussion of the transfer of perceived learning into day-to-day coaching, I will compare the postgraduate award to a turning point, hoped to aid the movement from one professional status to another (Atkinson, 2017; Strauss, 1959). Here, I will recognise that the power of milieu shaped the extent to which practitioners implemented novel insights in professional situations (Cooley, 1902; Holstein and Gubrium, 2000). Then, I will compare GBs to structures that UKCC CL4 coaches, educators, and managers considered environments of support in some instances and on other occasions, resisting to research-informed practice (Cooley, 1918; Strauss, 1959). In relation to this, I will interpret the deep-rooted beliefs that certain stakeholders associated with GBs as embedded in the cultural understandings of sports coaching (Fine, 1979; Fine and Kleinman, 1979).

To close this chapter, I will present research experiences that I relate to assumptions that those outside sporting environments associate with coaching. I will draw on theorisations of the wider contexts that we shape as individuals and that influence our behaviours in reciprocal processes. This will include reference to what Blumer and Cooley termed public opinion, Mead's generalised other, and the notion of institutions that Holstein and Gubrium identified (Blumer, 1946; Cooley, 1907; 1918; Holstein and Gubrium, 2000; Mead, 1934).

From UKCC CL4 award into (new) professional environments

Over the course of my fieldwork, I recognised that practitioners viewed award outcomes relevant to their professional lives. While some coaches focused on completion of the PG Dip and UKCC CL4 certificate, others sought to progress onto a Masters degree following successful award completion. Overall, participants shared a view of these academic qualifications as impactful to coaches' careers. As an example, Anna, who completed the UKCC CL4 award at the time of my study, wanted to place herself ahead of other coaches. She regarded the qualifications she would gain upon successful award completion as indicative of her coaching expertise. Anna voiced her considerations in the following way:

I wanted to be ahead of the game, improve myself, thinking about my future. If I'm going to command better positions, which I'm capable of doing, but you just need backing for a bit more credibility to do that. It's something I knew would be challenging but if I was going to be in that coaching environment, I'd want to have something I could be, "I've been through this, I've got this qualification" to then put it into a practical format in coaching. (Anna, coach learner)

In a similar vein, Toni envisaged that the Masters degree, which he planned to attend upon award completion, would confirm the international success he has achieved as a coach of elite athletes. Toni said:

I'm looking for a learning experience and Masters because I need something. I have the experience, but I need something at the end of my name that says, "You coached a gold medal". But, it's robust because I'll have a Masters in coaching. I'm looking for, say credibility. The Masters gives me opportunity to be employed in different situations, an educational establishment. My basic experience doesn't. I'm looking forward to my existence beyond sport. The story of my athletes become old. The Masters doesn't, which gives you a different credibility. How do you exist as a coach? If you have a Masters then you know in 15 years' time when nobody remembers that [your success as a coach], then you can say, "Yeah but I have a Masters [for which I will use the CL4 award as a stepping stone]." (Toni, coach learner)

The existence beyond current coaching practice recurred in my conversations with those, who completed the award. Lewis, for instance, seemed conscious of his age when he spoke about his professional future; he said:

I guess going forwards ... I'm 46. I don't know how much longer, I wanna keep coaching on the front line. Maybe when you're 50 ... I'm not sure whether I'll be doing that when I'm 50 or 55, so obviously, having a further education behind you helps if you're potentially going into another field or profession. (Lewis, coach learner)

Connor described in the following way, why the UKCC CL4 award as an academic qualification was significant to his professional situation:

When I sold the [coaching] business, I went through a process of finding a job. I thought, "Actually, I have hit the glass ceiling with regard to which jobs I was accessing." I did look into going back to university anyway. It just happened that the Level 4 programme presented itself at the time. It seemed like an obvious marriage between academic and some coach education. (Connor, UKCC CL4 coach)

Colin argued in a similar vein, restating the perceived value that, he hoped, the PG Dip would entail in future employment situations. His outlook onto professional progression facilitated his management of the academic challenges he had overcome during his completion of the UKCC CL4 award; he admitted:

[I'm] somebody who's thinking, "If I get these assignments done, it's the next step to employment" or something like this. I just need to keep focused on what's in front of me. So not get intimidated by the tasks, but just dive into it. Then go smash it out in that time and get it done. That's the main thing ... yeah that's the main thing. (Colin, coach learner)

From the outset of his studies on the UKCC CL4 award, Marcus appraised his learning as incomplete without completion of a Masters degree. He considered this postgraduate qualification of utmost importance to progressing his career as well as

distinguishing himself from others, who applied for positions that he sought. During one of our conversations, Marcus explained:

As far as I can see, I won't have completed it unless I have the Masters degree (MSc). I'm not doing it to do the PGDip, I'm doing it to do the MSc. I already got a degree, so any less, there's no point in doing, because it wouldn't really make much difference in the kudos of qualifications, if you will. ... Having the MSc in the area of sports coaching, I think if you were to pursue employment, it would certainly give you more clout on any application or interview. Particularly in education, which is where I work essentially. Most PE [physical education] teachers have a degree in PE or Postgraduate Certificate in Education. But very few have a Masters degree and those, who do, often have it in education. To have a Masters in sports coaching puts you above the average PE teacher and then Level 4 UKCC ... Most people have Level 1 or 2, even level 3 is getting harder to achieve. Having the Level 4 does separate you from people. I don't think you could do the Level 4 without having reached a certain standard in your coaching. (Marcus, coach learner)

Recurrent comments, such as those I present here, led me to reflect that the outcomes of the UKCC CL4 award represented milestones in practitioner careers. From a standpoint of professional development, this seemed to make sense to me, since several coaches, who completed the award, had limited, if any, experience in HE settings prior to the UKCC CL4 award.

The suggestions that participants voiced in connection to their expectations and aspirations associated with the PG Dip and Masters degree could be related to theorisations on status and turning points (Atkinson, 2017; Becker and Strauss, 1956; Strauss, 1959). Strauss (1959) assumed life to be imbued with phases, which are temporal in nature and occur in connection to different statuses that we would reach over the course of time. In a symbolic interactionist sense, it was proposed that we would engage parallel in different phases based on our participation in various social environments (e.g. Blumer, 1969; Strauss, 1959). In a wider context, Becker and Strauss (1956:263) offered that adult life and identity, were characterised by

continuous development and ‘...passages from status to status’. Significant to such status passage were turning points that represent ‘...points in development when an individual has to take stock, to re-evaluate, revise, resee, and rejudge’ our assumptions and social positions (Strauss, 1959:102).

Atkinson (2017:92) described a turning point as ‘...a matter of local, situated meaning’. The author acknowledged that these did not necessarily represent singular moments, but could also encompass periods in adult lives when we become aware of changes in our conduct. Since these alterations tend to occur gradually and could be seemingly mundane, Strauss wrote that turning points were useful as ‘...a marker of progression, or regression ... a milestone...’ and would enable us to recognise change (Strauss, 1959:95). Similar to Mead (1934) and Cooley (1902), the theorist wrote that it was necessary for this recognition to occur for us to implement novel understandings when participating in social settings. In line with interactionist reasoning, Strauss (1959), similar to Atkinson (2017) in his writing on ethnography, understood the individualised character of turning points and appreciated the distinctiveness that progression from one status to another would hold. Despite these variances, ultimately, Strauss wrote that individuals would reach a point, where they recognised their progress and drew on transformed perspectives to passage towards a new status in their professional lives. This could constitute a position in a current environment that required advanced skills or it could comprise of moving towards a new professional setting. Similar to other experiences in everyday life, however, the theorists assumed that turning points would occur in close conjunction to others in our social environments (e.g. Blumer, 1969; Strauss, 1959; Atkinson, 2017).

In the context of my study, I propose that the UKCC CL4 award represented a novel opportunity for those, who took part in my research, to engage with academic study in sports coaching, a subject area that practitioners felt familiar with. I suggest that this facilitated coaches' contemplations around progression towards a new professional status. In this sense, I believe that coach learners recognised the UKCC CL4 award as a turning point that was envisaged to open new professional doors (Strauss, 1959). In some iteration of earlier comments in this chapter, particular importance was awarded here to the academic outcomes of this learning journey, such as the PG Dip and Masters degree completion. These were new and, in some respect, believed to support coaches in moving to a new professional status (Atkinson, 2017).

For instance, coaches, such as Toni and Lewis, spoke about the extensive periods they had committed to the "phase" of coaching. They seemed to feel equipped to aspire towards positions for the achievement of which a postgraduate qualification was expected (Strauss, 1959). For them, as well as Marcus, these opportunities might lay in environments outside sports coaching. For Anna, the expertise she believed to refine over the course of the UKCC CL4 award was hoped to support her in positioning herself at the forefront of coaching (Becker and Strauss, 1956). From my fieldwork experiences with practitioners, such as Marcus, Connor, Colin, and Anna, I offer that coaches envisaged that their new, research-informed knowledge would be useful to extending their employment opportunities in professional environments other than their current practitioner positions. Established in their coaching careers, I suggest that individuals, such as Toni, an elite coach, and Lewis, a Talent Development coach, felt ready for change in their professional lives.

The moments when recognition of the UKCC CL4 award as a milestone to practitioner careers occurred, however, differed among coaches (Atkinson, 2017; Strauss, 1959). For some coach learners, the experience of a turning point was obvious early. Marcus for instance, expected from the day of his successful UKCC CL4 award application that he would follow up his studies with a Masters degree. This was hoped to increase his trustworthiness in employment situations in educational settings (e.g. schools). Similarly, Connor and Colin adopted early views of the UKCC CL4 award as a milestone in their professional conduct. Others, however, Lewis for instance, recognised gradually that the award could be useful in the future. While he had voiced this awareness at the time of my research, when we spoke, he had not yet developed specific strategies as to how his new qualification could impact upon his professional life. Nevertheless, from conversations with practitioners, I propose that several coaches shared an understanding of the postgraduate UKCC CL4 award as supportive of status passage from their current professional milieu to a new ‘...social position...’ (Atkinson, 2017:85).

Throughout my fieldwork, it became apparent that coach educators and coach education managers reflected practitioner perspectives, encouraging coach learners to consider the UKCC CL4 award as more than a mere set of assessments they needed to pass to obtain a Level 4 qualification. For instance, Brooke felt that those practitioners, who completed the UKCC CL4 award, were experts in terms of the technical and tactical components of their sport. Similar to coaches in my study, he regraded coach learning in educational contexts of the award as useful to deepening coaches’ knowledge of processes that underpinned practice.

In one of our interview conversations, he explained his thoughts in the following way:

I like the idea of a programme, which helps coaches to create conditions for expertise around them. So, understanding that they already know enough about their sport, probably that they need to know a lot more about themselves. To think about what would be the longest lever from where they currently are in their practice and understanding the world to the next level. I think that would be very individual. It seems to me that people, operating at that level [who complete the UKCC CL4 award], are ripe to begin to develop themselves, rather than acquire more knowledge about how to coach others. (Brooke, freelance coach educator)

Tyler compared the adoption of insights gained from the UKCC CL4 award to a lifestyle change. He said:

I was trying to emphasise the point [during level 4 delivery] that, “Yes this is something you do on your course, but this is something we want you to incorporate into coaching practice. It’s a lifestyle change you were doing in your coaching career that we want you to implement rather than just see it as an assignment.” I think for coaches, it certainly has an impact, where they see benefits actually integrate with their coaching practice. (Tyler, HEi lecturer)

In a similar vein, Lisa commented:

I can see our people finish or currently in the system changing the way they go about what they do. I can see they’re influencing the world they exist in, running their own business or work for somebody else. There’s change within national centres ... We’ve got a couple from Scotland, they have potential to make change at that level. I think 50% of cohort 1 and 2 sit on British Canoeing learning and development groups. That’s how we move coaches forward. There seems to be growing appetite for new knowledge in coaching, to bridge that gap between what used to be a university domain and apply it in what they do. People are ready for it. (Lisa, BC Level 4 Programme Director)

Here, Marcus, who had been running his own club for several years when he participated in my study, explained how he hoped his UKCC CL4 certification would confirm and draw attention to the expertise he demonstrated. He described:

I think having the level 4 gives you, for starters, a little bit of kudos. If you start to get the results, the area might associate somebody with a level 4, as somebody with the right attributes ... If you’ve got a big club, you’ve got a level

4 coach, maybe they're starting to say, "Maybe this is because what is learned on the course." That it's more relevant and appealing because surely, the reason membership increases is because you're appealing, whatever you are offering, is appealing to the people in the club. (Marcus, coach learner)

Ryan had recognised at the time of my fieldwork that he drew on learning gained the UKCC CL4 award in his responsibilities as a coach educator. He told me:

You know, I teach on the level 3, 2 and 1. Having the level 4, I think is quite vital for me. I mean for other people it might be the Postgraduate Diploma. Again, for some other people, it might be really important that they've got a higher coaching qualification [the UKCC CL4 award], if they are more into the elite side of things. But for me, it is more as a coach educator and the top level that we offer is the level 4, so it makes sense that I have it. (Ryan, coach learner)

Similar to Marcus and Ryan, it seemed that Grace hoped to share not only her passion for coaching, but also her newly gained, research-informed understandings with peer professionals, when she commented:

Once I've finished and passed, I will be the first person in the region to have a level four qualification. I hope that as part of that, I can go to other clubs and share what I've learned, share some of the principles, particularly some of the challenges and how I've overcome them. Not necessarily promote more people to do the level four, but to become a person who promotes ... the value of being a really good coach, what that means and particularly people who've been coaching a long time, who might be a bit stuck in their ways. I'd like to see myself in a mentor role for coaches, who might feel a little bit isolated. I see myself particularly as a woman going off and having an ambassadorial role as a female coach at that level. (Grace, UKCC CL4 coach)

In connection to above-presented comments, I propose that stakeholders contemplated not only the value of their involvement in the UKCC CL4 award to their individual conduct, but also reflected on opportunities this rendered to cascade understandings outside the course. To make theoretical sense of this consideration, I wish to return to the concept of power of milieu, in the context of which Cooley (1902) understood the influences of those settings, in which we enacted behaviours. To

exemplify what was meant here, the theorist wrote about specialist environments, such as those found at university, which he considered supportive of generating new understandings and challenging learners' existing assumptions. Crucial to evolving knowledge were academic experts, whom Cooley (1902:34) viewed as '...the richest minds...' in distinct subject areas with '...time and encouragement...' to engage with learners. Remaining within the example of educational environments, the theorist argued that upon graduation, learners would leave said specialist settings and enter alternative milieus, which would draw former student attention to new responsibilities. The theorist suggested that even though these new circumstances might not align completely with the thinking, developed in educational environments, it was the responsibility of the individual not to forget what had been learned. To accomplish this, Cooley (1902) expected former students to continue immersing themselves in sources they had accessed in learning environments, even upon completion of their educational journey. In doing so, according to Cooley (1902), we would succeed to free ourselves from the limitations we might identify when entering out of educational environments into other professional settings.

In relation to my research experiences, I suggest that coaches, coach educators and managers recognised that it was the responsibility of practitioners to embed insights gained from their learning on the UKCC CL4 award in other settings. In line with my interpretation of Cooley (1902), it could be argued here that the power of milieu shifted once the educational environments of the award did not surround practitioners any longer. Indeed, as described by educators, such as Brook and Tyler, it was up to coaches to implement novel understandings as lifestyle changes in environments outside the UKCC CL4 award. In light of writing by Cooley (1902), this could be

facilitated by the ongoing immersion with research-informed material, such as journal papers, upon completion of the UKCC CL4 award. Similar to this, it seemed that practitioners deemed it important to continue processes, initiated while completing the award as Marcus, Ryan, and Grace noted. Similar to educators, I contend that these coaches interpreted the processes and outcomes of the award beyond course assessments. I propose that these considerations occurred in relation to the settings that were particular to practitioners as individuals. As an example, for Ryan this occurred in relation to his responsibilities as a coach educator. Grace contemplated her knowledge exchange in dialogues with peer practitioners. In line with the theorisation of Cooley (1902), I suggest that it was significant for practitioners to interpret opportunities and implications within and outside the milieus of the UKCC CL4 award to understand in greater depth how they could best implement aspects from educational situations in their professional lives.

Governing Bodies as environments of support or resistance

While I appreciated that coaches, coach educators and coach education managers considered it the responsibility of those, involved in the UKCC CL4 award to implement insights learned in coaching practice, I wish to consider that this occurred in wider organisational settings. I acknowledge that I only immersed myself in the awards of two GBs, however, I have spoken also to stakeholders outside these settings about their experiences. The participants in my study shared diverse perspectives in this regard. James, for instance, felt that although he was able to adapt his practice in light of research-informed insights, he was aware that his peers on the course might not return to equally receptive workplace settings. He articulated his thoughts as follows:

I work for myself by myself, so I can do anything I want. I'm sure folks that are at national centres, they probably bring some of it in but whether they can do what I'm doing, I don't know. I think certainly we're all doing some of it. I know that some of the limitations of working within a governing body is that you kind of have to present the syllabus. (James, UKCC CL4 coach)

When I spoke to Toni about his perspectives on GBs as work environments, he shared with me the challenges he had experienced. He said:

Coaching is precarious ... I used to work for a government department – there was security. With coaching, you step into a non-secure position. It changes. New Head Coach; they want something. New Performance Director; they want it different. You're at the beck and call of the Governing Body. I coached an athlete to the podium and they said, "We don't want to employ you anymore. You only have one athlete. We think this isn't value to the system." I go, "Okay but it was a medal. Surely somebody coaching a medallist is of more value than somebody coaching five people, none of whom medal." ... It's strange, but that's the position you may find yourself in. Even at a point of success, you can be fired. (Toni, coach learner)

Adam recognised that the knowledge of CL4 coaches could be seen as a threat to long-standing beliefs inherent in employment contexts; he noted:

I think the risk is that if coaches leave [the UKCC CL4 award] and start questioning [existing practice] ... I think the response could be, "Sod off. We know better." ... That's the risk that they become isolated individual coaches.
(Adam, HEi lecturer)

When asked, why he thought this way, Adam continued to explain:

What they did is, Governing Bodies looked at levels 1, 2, and 3 and because of the mapping of the UKCC qualification framework they went to certain awarding bodies. They went to awarding bodies that certified level 1 to 3. ... Now, level 4 was never linked to level 1 to 3. Governing Bodies were comfortable with level 1, 2, and 3. They understood the idea of an Assistant Coach, a Lead Coach, or an Annual Coach. But because most of them have come from the bottom up, they couldn't understand the level 4. ... It was seen as being very special, it was elite, unique, protected, and restricted. So, as a coach, you couldn't do a level 4 in the Governing Bodies' eyes unless you were elite.
(Adam, HEi lecturer)

Toni voiced also his perspectives in relation to the processes that national sporting organisations, such as scUK, played in his opinion in the context of the UKCC CL4 award. He described:

I think what Sports Coach UK have done is put in this next level but they're not looking at it from a, "Let's examine what we are as professional body as coaches." Some are employed, some are not. Those that are employed work in environments that are precarious. Those that are not employed, try and exist in a precarious environment. So, what are you doing for that? "It's not a football team on a Saturday afternoon, I coach them on a Tuesday and Thursday." It might be but is that really coaching? No, it's probably participation. I think also from UKCC Level 4 is this, "Do you understand what participation and performance coaching is, the requirements of the very high level? The answer's probably not." (Toni, coach learner)

In this connection, Rhys, a HEi lecturer, described that changes to coach education and coaching practice initiated by the UKCC CL4 award, could indeed initiate tensions between "old" and "new" assumptions. He told me:

Recognising that those two systems [UKCC CL4 award and other coach education] will have different masters to serve and maybe competing agendas. At the end of the day, having a system that's coordinated and overall integrated makes a lot of sense. But it's also about who has power in those relationships

and they can be quite political. Some of that's the tricky stuff. But in a general sense, anything that has universities and sports working together is a good thing. (Rhys, HEi lecturer)

With the academically informed delivery and assessment, I suggest that the UKCC CL4 award and those, involved in it, challenged existing understandings of coach education and coaching practice. Although I acknowledge the limited in-depth theorisation of structure in process-orientated symbolic interactionist writing, I wish to consider tentatively those contemplations that I believe theorists did articulate in this regard. Symbolic interactionist theorists assume that the individual and social acts of human beings occurred in the context of wider environments (e.g. Cooley, 1918; Holstein and Gubrium, 2000; Strauss, 1959). For instance, Cooley (1918:20) prompted that the activities in professional settings, would comprise also of '...the organization of ideas...' in these particular environments. Similarly, Strauss (1959:119) wrote of institutional aims and objectives as '...organizational framework[s]...' which professionals were expected to balance in their individual acts and interpersonal encounters. Further to this, Holstein and Gubrium (2000:165) wrote that the context-related meanings that we developed were '...mediated by organizational conditions...' and therefore organizationally embedded. While Holstein and Gubrium (2000) argued here that the variety of professional venues that existed in Western twenty-first century societies, rendered a diversity of options to develop social selves, the authors understood that certain assumptions would engrain themselves in organisational structures and, thus, individual practices over time. Interactions were considered at the heart of developing, maintaining and altering these embedded understandings (Cooley, 1918; Strauss, 1959). From our engagement in more than one organisational context, Cooley (1918) theorised that it was possible for us to develop understandings that deviated from

longstanding habits in structures. According to Cooley, those in organisational settings, who feel that new conduct would disrupt the certainty formerly identified in established behaviour, might interpret our individual developments undesirable. Yet, Holstein and Gubrium (2000) prompted that it was necessary to revise existing standards to avoid the plateauing or even regression in organisational settings. Since this could lead to a sense of struggle between longstanding and novel assumptions, Cooley (1918) wrote that it was important to find ways to present new perspectives in a manner that would make them seem valuable to those too, who hoped to adhere to established traditions. Vice versa, however, it would be of equal importance to consider how new views could be aligned with what was known before (Cooley, 1918).

To make sense of these contemplations in the context of my research, I suggest that the perspectives of coaches, coach educators and coach education managers, reflect an awareness of the different organisational settings in which implementations of research-informed understandings would occur (Cooley, 1918; Holstein and Gubrium, 2000; Strauss, 1959). I believe that stakeholders, such as Toni, Rhys, Adam, and James recognised that some professional environments might consider it problematic to interweave the research-informed knowledge with existing traditions. It would seem that certain individuals in the workplaces of coaches were thought to hold on to embedded routines in regard of how coaching practice and coach education should take place. I believe that coaches, such as James and Toni, have begun moving to new venues with their completion of the UKCC CL4 award, which led them to refine understandings in ways that did not fully align anymore with traditional conduct in workplaces, such as GBs (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000). To overcome this “struggle” of understandings, which Adam, James, and Toni described, I propose in line with Cooley

(1918) that it could be seen as the collective responsibility of those involved in the UKCC CL4 award with those in professional contexts to identify ways in which new and longstanding assumptions could be interweaved.

Nevertheless, as Adam described, it seemed problematic for those, who wished to create an impact in their GBs at the time of my study, that there appeared to be less of those involved with the UKCC CL4 award in comparison to those, who were not only embedded, but also accepted in the existing structures of sports coaching. Over the course of my fieldwork, it became apparent that those involved with the UKCC CL4 award did not feel it was clear how this fit with other definitions and roles in sports coaching. Cath, a HEi lecturer, feared that UKCC CL4 coaches operated in professional environments, imbued with inadequate clarity in terms of the responsibilities of coaches. In particular, it was challenging that there was a lack of transparency and diversity in the definitions associated with practitioners, who trained athletes at different levels of sport. These coupled quotations indicate how Cath voiced her thoughts:

I think we need to have a much longer process of getting coaches to the level, where they are fit to coach. But that is added to by the problem that there's not really a career structure or a professional development pathway for coaches, apart from a very few. If we were to compare it with other professions, where you need a degree, part of me thinks that's right but the other part thinks, "Why are we asking people to do a degree, if there's no real room where they can actually employ that to support themselves." So, it's difficult. I think that we make it too easy for people to call themselves coaches, because we don't have any criteria that say, "You are a coach. You are an assistant. You are a parent volunteer", whatever you happen to be. Everyone just calls themselves a coach. That's not particularly helpful when there's no ideal professional development either.

I also think that one of the other things ... it may be changing a little bit but not quickly. A lot of the Governing Bodies tend to dictate what they will and won't do, receiving of government funding. The government is behind this whole idea

of upskilling the coaching workforce, which I think they should be. Then, they need to be a little bit more, how shall I say, helpful. The Governing Bodies have to do whatever the government is wanting them to do in terms of licensing or professionalisation, otherwise they don't get their money. So, I don't know. They seem rather dictatorial and I am not so sure that's necessarily the answer, but I do think that there needs to be a bit more legislation. (Cath, HEi lecturer)

Adam described:

I think the term coach is not widely understood. I think it's very broadly used. There's lots of people, who because it's UKCC, have the title of coach but often don't do any coaching. (Adam, HEi lecturer)

In this connection, Rhys alluded to his perspectives on “fast tracking” former elite athletes into high performance coaching positions, which he considered, to add to the complexities that existed in sports coaching:

There's an increasing number that will have tertiary requirements, a bachelor's degree in any field but that's not the norm quite yet [in employment situations for coaches]. Similarly, the interview process of those, short listed varies considerably as well, from not really much of a process through to some quite rigorous ones. Having been an elite athlete in a sport you now coach can bring some wonderful things. The issue is that I'm not convinced there's sufficient evidence that those things can't be gained through other means. It is also clear that those things are not the only thing that are required to be called high performance coach. ... I mean every coach will have played to some level and this idea about how high you made it, is not evidence based at all. ... It's all about the culture, politics and who knows who. I wouldn't discount those, who have been excellent at performance in their sport. I think there's tremendous coaches coming out that kind of environment. But it blows my mind how many coaches we miss, simply because we shut down that alternative pathway. (Rhys, HEi lecturer)

Michael hoped that the UKCC CL4 award would become a milestone in creating refined distinctions between practitioners and their diverse levels of expertise:

I think level 4 has a huge role to play. I see it as the scaffolding that all coach learning, coach development is based on and for some people that level 4 will be the one that they use to pull themselves up... . It gives us a level of consistency with lots of Governing Bodies appointing people to the positions that they should. It gives a benchmark ... It can also help to reduce what is called “the boys club network”, where somebody who wasn't qualified would

get a job because he was a friend. It gives transparency to the system. (Michael, scUK coach education manager)

Harry, who was BC Head of Coaching at the time of my research, noticed alterations to the ways in which UKCC CL4 practitioners appraised coaching. He explained:

Although it's a small group of people, I'm seeing a change of focus. I'd hope to see that cascade through coach education and encourage other people at lower levels to see the relevance to engage in academic content, some level of academic input. Or even benefit from an understanding of the relevance of theoretical underpinning to what they do. (Harry, BC Head of Coaching)

In Teresa's opinion, the UKCC CL4 award could indeed stimulate what she termed a culture change. Teresa commented:

I think there is a place for level four coaches, because I think sport needs a culture change in terms of coaches that we've got. Level four coaches can be the ones to initiate that culture change. ... There's still a lot of coaches at clubs that were pre-UKCC. They are coaches that don't understand long term athlete development, participant centred coaching, the need for retaining athletes within the sport ... this might just be my club environment but I know that it's not... . That being a coach that has athletes, who win lots of things makes you a good coach, seems to be a common theme. But actually my role as a coach is to help people achieve their ambitions and if that is winning an Olympic gold medal or getting selected for the GB team then that's my role, it's not to win medals, it's to help them perform to their best. (Teresa, UKCC CL4 coach)

Based on my research experiences, I would argue that the resistance that some of my participants associated with professional environments of GBs could be connected to the cultural understandings inherent in these organisations. To make sense of these recollections, I wish to consider selected symbolic interactionist writing on the concept of culture. Fine (1979), who considered culture implicit in Blumer's premises of symbolic interactionism, regarded this concept embedded in the meanings and definitions that groups of individuals shared. In this context, a culture could be considered a collection of more or less standardised ways to interpret, understand and

assign meanings to situations in our everyday lives (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000).

Given the multitude of environments that we immersed ourselves as individuals, Fine and Kleinman (1979) argued that we would adopt various connections with other social actors. As a result, the theorists proposed that we shared an ability to adapt to numerous subcultures based on the commonalities we defined with members in these clusters. These '...variant group cultures are derived from the larger culture...' or other subcultures, in which members would develop cultural elements through social interaction (Fine and Kleinman, 1979:8). In their interactionist interpretation of subcultures, however, the authors suggested that it would be '...erroneous to conceive of group members as interacting exclusively with each other' (Fine and Kleinman, 1979:8).

By contrast, small groups were interwoven with other clusters through dialogues, which could be interpreted from the perspectives of individual members as well as whole groups. With this communication between groups, between individuals, or between groups and selected individuals, Fine and Kleinman argued that we would disseminate cultural information (e.g. attitudes, values, principles). This way, we would also become members of more than only one subculture. Accordingly, Holstein and Gubrium (2000) portrayed culture as multidimensional and locally available, we act reflexively when considering our definitions of the situations we encountered with reference to our cultural understandings. To portray how we would draw on these considerations in everyday life, the theorists offered:

Local culture is always in the making, as members reflexively refer ongoing experience to their stocks of cultural knowledge and categories, both making sense of experiences and reinforming the cultural parameters called upon in the process (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000:162).

In a symbolic interactionist view of social life, here, I suggest that the authors placed emphasis on individuals as active agents, who took into account the particular features of our circumstances when engaging in social settings (e.g. Fine, 1979; Fine and Kleinman, 1979; Holstein and Gubrium, 2000). In this sense, culture is not something that was imposed on us. Rather, Holstein and Gubrium (2000) offered that we were responsible to feed into (sub)culture, to draw on cultural understandings and that we could be held accountable for our views.

The development and transformation of subcultures and assumptions inherent in them could be related further to Cooley's understanding of social change. In his 1897 text, the theorist drew on the exemplar of flowing water to theorise that obvious waves in the water, which we saw clearly, would evolve gradually. Yet, each such wave would consist of '...countless wavelets and ripples of all sizes and directions...' that contributed to a bigger picture in the water (Cooley, 1897:81). With this in mind, I believe that our interpersonal encounters in various situations should not be dismissed as insignificant individual efforts in subcultures. Rather, they could be viewed as "wavelets" that contributed to understandings developed in the wider cultural settings (Cooley, 1897).

In the context of my study, I propose that the coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers, who were involved in the UKCC CL4 award, demonstrated the shared adaptations they implemented as individuals and small groups (Cooley, 1897). In light of comments by Harry, Michael and Teresa, it could be argued that they had transformed their existing assumptions and now represented a subculture that distinguished itself from practices they had followed previously. In accordance with interactionist interpretations, I suggest that this was ongoing and occurred from social

interactions with those, within and outside UKCC CL4 environments (Fine and Kleinman, 1979; Holstein and Gubrium, 2000). As Harry and Teresa suggested, with this, those involved with the award were social agents, who contributed to the wider culture of sports coaching (Cooley, 1897; Fine, 1979; Fine and Kleinman, 1979; Holstein and Gubrium, 2000). In consideration of comments, such as those by Cath, Adam and Rhys, however, I suggest that it was challenging to determine how the award could fit in the landscape of the sports coaching profession, since the assumptions associated with it appeared to vary considerably. To this end, communication between UKCC CL4 coaches, educators, and managers, and with others outside these environments could be useful to sharing cultural elements and to transforming existing beliefs. According to my interpretations of writing by Fine (1979), Fine and Kleinman (1979), Holstein and Gubrium (2000), this would be useful to revisit the cultural elements inherent in sports coaching and to start identifying shared ways to interpret subcultures, such as that of the UKCC CL4 award.

The UKCC CL4 award in context with the coaching profession

In the final section of my findings and discussions, I will consider research experiences with coaches, coach educators, and coach education managers in relation to images of sports coaching. I will address perspectives that those seem to hold, who are not directly involved with the coaching profession. Although not of primary focus during my fieldwork, whenever we spoke about this matter, my participants shared lively recollections that led me to present their perspectives in my thesis.

I put forward that while it was important that GBs “bought into” the UKCC CL4 award and the research-informed knowledge of those engaging with it, all this occurred in the context of wider societal settings. As alluded to in the previous section, those, who took part in my study, felt that coaching was not understood in depth. Perhaps, it was therefore that coaching was not regarded “a real profession”. For my participants, this emerged particularly from encounters with others, who knew little about the complexities of coaching, other than what they saw in the media, understood from their own involvement in sport as a pastime or knew from others, who participated in sport. George, who managed the UKCC CL4 award on behalf of scUK, said:

What frustrates me is when people say, “Oh you’re just a coach.” You wouldn’t say to my wife, “Oh you’re just a teacher.” I think we’ve worked as hard, if not harder than most people, to get our qualifications and experience. From a whole society change, I think we will always be battling against that because sport is still seen as that kind of recreation bit. I think there is pockets of change greatly but I think it would take at least one generation, which means you’re looking at 20-25 years to see change. (George, scUK coach education manager)

Anna described her perspective in the following manner:

There needs to be a lot more respect for positions, for the people who are doing it. Well at all levels, and especially when it comes to the performance setting. There needs to be an understanding that these people know what they’re doing

and I think that some academic backing helps to underline that and then it's a profession, so people can get the wages or get the same sort of money as any other profession in that way. (Anna, coach learner)

During on of our conversations, Colin recalled numerous instances, where friends and family questioned what he did for a living. They did not seem to understand that he was in full-time employment as a coach. He told me:

"So what do you do for a real job?" is a comment that I heard quite a lot. So, the Level 4, I think this is a really good step forward to actually show, well this is what I'm doing as a profession and it is worthwhile. Then they'll see that I've got an academic qualification. That means something more widely to people like my family. (Colin, coach learner)

Comparably, Lewis recounted situations when those, who had little understanding of his work at a national centre for water sports, queried what he did; he commented:

"You're a coach and what do you do for a real job?" type things. People always say, "Oh you do that full-time?!" I think there's a big lack of knowledge in the community that it actually is a full-time profession and I think it would be really beneficial through the link to university. (Lewis, coach learner)

Cath, a HEi lecturer, explained that the societal perspective of sports coaching was problematic in this connection. She suggested:

The culture in the UK doesn't help. What I mean, if you look at the most media current sport, which I think is football ... you see this tradition of ex-players with little or no formal education, going out to play where they earn a lot of money and then they go into coaching. There doesn't seem to be any further requirement. I'm not saying this is the case with all of them. It seems to be that is a model that is repeated. I think we've got a bit of a problem there. I think also our culture doesn't tend to value sport as something that should be paid for and that's an issue as well. Like football, it's a sport where there's just that culture of not paying for sport. I think that's an issue. (Cath, HEi lecturer)

In addition to this, Toni believed that the pathways to becoming a coach were too easy and did not aid creating an image of sports coaching that could be compared to other,

more traditional professions, such as medicine or education. He said during one of our conversations:

I think we've gone too much in one way. "Oh you can get this online and this is easy and this is and I don't have to be anywhere." I think there's too much of it. You know, it's sad but anybody could get a coaching qualification, so therefore, a lot of the early qualifications you just sit in the room for two hours and they give you a badge and that's it. (Toni, coach learner)

Susan explained:

I think we scream people out, based on our preconceived ideas of coaching, but we should be there for them... . You get professional mentors in business and professional coaches ... they're professionals because of the way they are with that person on that task in hand. I do have a different outlook on things like that than most people ... but you know I've been from the bottom to the top. I've watched my kids be taught and coached and I just think that we put labels on coaches. (Susan, scUK coach education manager)

In connection to the diverse comments that I present in this section, I propose that coaches, coach educators and coach education managers demonstrated an awareness and, at times, frustrations with the opinions held about coaching. This could be related to symbolic interactionist understandings of societal norms and values that shape individual and social processes. In this relation, Cooley (1907; 1918) and Blumer (1946) wrote about public opinion, while Mead (1934) recognised a generalised other, and Holstein and Gubrium (2000) defined institutions in their postmodern interpretations of self. My reference to these concepts in relation to one another does not imply that I assume the authors' theorisation was the same. Rather, I recognised resemblance in the arguments on wider social processes that could be identified in our social realities. It was suggested that public opinion resembled a process that developed from '...underlying like-mindedness, sufficient for mutual understanding and influence...'

among those, who shared principle beliefs (Cooley, 1918:379). Cooley considered this a form of social consciousness on its widest scale and wrote:

The social ideas that I have are closely connected to those that other people have, and act and react upon them to form a whole. This gives us public opinion, in the broad sense of a group state of mind of which the group is more or less distinctly aware. The unity of public opinion, like all vital unity, is not one of uniformity, but of organization, of interaction and mutual influence (Cooley, 1907:679).

In a similar process-orientated view, Mead (1934:155) identified the generalised other as ‘...broad activities of any given social whole or organized society as such within the experiential field...’ that characterised perspectives, mutually shared in social communities. The theorist regarded the generalised other as a pointer of orientation that would award some unity to our sense of self. Comparably, Blumer (1946:191) wrote about public opinion ‘...as a collective product...’ which the theorist thought of ‘...as a composite opinion formed out of the several opinions that are held in the public’. At its core, Blumer viewed a universe of discourse that constituted of broad agreements on the meanings that were of central consideration to a particular society. To this end, it was essential for us to communicate with each other and, most importantly, to demonstrate a willingness to compromise and adjust to the suggestions others shared with us (Blumer, 1946). Although we would align our views with those that others held, we would maintain our ability to develop our “self” in individually distinct ways (e.g. Cooley, 1907; Mead, 1934). According to Mead, this was possible since different individuals would interpret generic beliefs, i.e. the generalised other, from distinct standpoints. This, we would accomplish by interpreting the behaviours of others and by drawing upon these to define our own understandings. Indeed, while we would share with others certain norms, Mead assumed that we

continued to be actively involved in meaning-creation in relation to our interactions with others and ourselves. As alluded to in previous instances in this chapter, our interpretive processes when participating in social settings, would lead us to develop diverse definitions of self (Cooley, 1907; Mead, 1934).

This said, Mead in his 1934 text and later, Holstein and Gubrium (2000) iterated that we developed multiple selves that would not arise out of interaction as a simplistic process. Indeed, at times, we would encounter barriers in interpersonal encounters that took place in complex, often hierarchically organised societies (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000). In this relation, the authors wrote about institutions as society's impact on our definitions of self that influenced the '...senses of who and what we are, were, and can be' (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000:13). Adopting an even broader interpretation of mutual beliefs in societal settings than their forerunners, Holstein and Gubrium (2000) noted that institutions could represent a variety of things including organisational boundaries, societal assumptions, but also financial limits, for instance. Similar to symbolic interactionist suggestions by Blumer (1946), Cooley (1907; 1918), and Mead (1934), the authors argued that we would act and interact within the margins of different institutions to '...assemble the selves [we] need to function effectively' (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000:13). Acknowledging the intellectual contributions of traditional symbolic interactionists, Holstein and Gubrium emphasised that our societies have become increasingly complex since studies conducted by authors, such as Cooley, Mead, and Blumer. The authors propose that this complexity could not only facilitate, but also constrain the ways in which we would interpret situations and subsequently develop our sense of self (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000).

In the context of my research, I suggest that the influence of societal norms could be observed in the suggestions that coaches, coach educators and coach education managers shared with me. I believe that the attitudes of those, outside UKCC CL4 communities seemed engrained in established beliefs associated with sports coaching, which could be considered resembling what was identified in theoretical concepts of public opinion, generalised other or institutions (Blumer, 1946; Cooley, 1907; 1918; Mead, 1934; Musolf, 1992). In particular, comments by Anna, George, Colin, and Lewis portrayed that there seemed to be little appreciation in the public eye for sports coaching (Cooley, 1907; 1918). Upon reflection of my fieldwork, I contend that practitioners felt disappointed and, at times, discouraged when hearing comments such as those outlined by Lewis and Colin, which they have endured throughout their coaching careers. To some extent, I felt they hoped to complete qualifications, such as the PG Dip, which they anticipated to be understood and valued by the public.

In some respect, I propose that coaches' wider social situations affected how practitioners hoped to develop their sense of "self" (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000; Mead, 1934). Although I would argue that personal development and professional progression motivated coaches to embark on the postgraduate learning journey, I suggest that the lack of recognition associated with the perceptions others had of their day-to-day work, affirmed coaches' decisions to persist with their completion of the UKCC CL4 award. It could be argued in light of what Cooley (1907) and Mead (1934) suggested that my participants developed new versions of their "selves" from their involvement in the UKCC CL4 award.

Further to this, I suggest that the comments by Toni, Cath, and Susan exemplify that the various interpretations of what coaching is and how we can educate practitioners.

This feeds into the misconceptions that practitioners, such as Lewis and Colin, experienced. In line with suggestions by Blumer (1946), Cooley (1907), Mead (1934), Holstein and Gubrium (2000), I propose that the UKCC CL4 award could be seen as a spark that has set off transformations of understandings and initial disseminations of research-informed knowledge in settings within and outside coaching. For this process to continue, however, I would argue that the efforts from individual coaches, coach educators and coach education managers, invested in the UKCC CL4 award (i.e. “bottom up”), require the support of those in national sporting organisations (i.e. “top down”). If these efforts occurred in unison, I suggest that a new interpretation of coaching as a profession could be embedded gradually in the wider sporting and public opinion.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

Looking back to look forward

As Wolcott (2009) dryly suggests, writing about any research project has to stop at some point. It is not because there is nothing else to say or the passion for this subject matter is fading. Rather, it is because there comes a time, when research and writing about it simply needs to finish. This is the time. In an attempt to align myself with Wolcott's suggestions, following this introduction, I will revisit in brief what was at the core of the research process. I will highlight the findings of my study in line with the research questions I posed, outlining also some wider conclusions. In doing so, I will attend to what I consider new, important and significant about my work. Moving on, I will present some implications for practice and areas for future research, directing them to bodies and individuals, who may be able to utilise them to inform policy and future developments. Then, I will contemplate yet again the theoretical and methodological choices I made and the merit of their application. Lastly, I reflect on my experiences; those of a neophyte researcher, early-career academic and an outsider to the UK coach education system, who became increasingly comfortable with the multiplicities that I found within ethnographically inspired research.

Paths that I have taken: My research revisited

Throughout my PhD, the attention was towards studying the perspectives and experiences of coaches, coach educators and coach education managers involved in the UKCC CL4 award. These considerations were informed by my worldview that we define meanings as individuals from our engagement within various social settings. Positioning my work within the interpretivist research paradigm has helped me not only to recognise different stakeholder views, but also to make sense of the feelings and beliefs that I associated with the often-messy realities of research (Ellis, 2004).

I conducted ethnographically inspired fieldwork over a period of 18 months with coaches, coach educators and coach education managers involved with the BC and BJA UKCC CL4 award. Although this seemed like a simple structure for a PhD, the devil was in the detail. The multitude of research methods that I adopted and the variety of voices that I heard were rich and sometimes overwhelming. These included semi-structured interviews, observations of stakeholders in the learning context and my engagement in naturally occurring conversations, which I documented in hand-written field notes, reflexive comments and audio recordings of interview conversations. For a theoretical interpretation of my insights, I drew on selected symbolic interactionist work, including what I have referred to as the traditional texts by Blumer, Cooley, Mead and Strauss in addition to selected writing, such as that of Fine (1979), Holstein and Gubrium (2000). My reading of this work was valuable to make sense of the individual and interpersonal processes that coaches, coach educators and coach education managers perceived in relation to the nature, value and impact of the UKCC CL4 award.

What is important, new and significant? So what?

One might argue that these following pages are the most important. In writing these, I wish to “close the loop” in this thesis by addressing insights that I see closely connected to the research questions I set out to answer. Further to this, I intend to position the research with regard to its novelty and in relation to its significance. I invite the reader to consider the “So what?” question. I am asking, “What value does this research add to our understanding?” Increasingly, we are being asked to justify the impact of our work. Although throughout the last four years, I have given updates and initial findings presentations to fellow academics, key stakeholders in coach education and the GBs that have been central to this research (see Appendix 7); I will attempt to help the reader understand the explicit value of this work. As outlined Chapter 2 (see page 28), my particular interest during this study was on the nature of the UKCC CL4 award, its perceived value and impact as well as the experiences of coaches, coach educators and coach education managers of their involvement in high performance coach education.

Beginning with the nature of the UKCC CL4 award, I suggest that it is novel in the context of UK coach education. This stems from the longitudinal design and new relationships that GBs and HEIs have entered for the purpose of award establishment, implementation and delivery. Overall, the nature is characterised by phases, during which coaches are distance learners and times when practitioners attend residential events, where GB coach educators and HEi lecturers offer educator-led sessions and less formal engagements (e.g. group work, discussions). As outlined in some depth in Chapter 5 Part B, differences between the BC and the BJA CL4 award were evident and differently shaped the experiences of those participating. While there are a number of

reasons for these differences, ultimately it was the individuals and the relationships between key personnel that shaped the programmes. This became particularly apparent in my comparison of the collaborative efforts of Lisa, Evelyn and others in the BC context, with the work of Nicole, who seemed isolated in her endeavour to balance the postgraduate benchmark with practitioner interests.

This affected the arrangements for residential events (e.g. accommodation and catering), delivery and assessment formats, as well as the decision as to which educators would be chosen to deliver to and assess practitioners. On the BC UKCC CL4 award, for example, a range of educators, from established scholars to coaches from previous CL4 cohorts, provided a blend of mediated, interactive and self-directed learning situations. This, I suggest, facilitated coaches' professional development (Araya et al., 2015; Galvan et al., 2012). The opportunity for all participants to reside in the same, catered accommodation supported the creation of welcoming environments. It allowed coaches to put aside everyday responsibilities of family and work to focus solely on their learning. This contrasted with my experiences on the BJA UKCC CL4 award, where interactions between coach learners and myself occurred mostly with the HEi lecturers, who delivered sessions during residential events. These sessions were always at SHU and their emphasis was more on the physiological, psychological and biomechanical underpinnings of sports performance. Less so on the social, cultural and pedagogical aspects of sports coaching. This affected not only how I, but also the practitioners thought about the nature of the UKCC CL4 award and, ultimately, its potential value. Echoing the conclusions outlined by authors, such as Irwin et al. (2004) and Mesquita et al. (2014), coaches welcomed opportunities to

interact with peers, while lecture-like delivery was perceived to be overstretched and difficult to follow.

Why the coaches, coach educators and coach education managers acted and interacted in certain ways could be related to the positions of stakeholders, their relationships to one another and their interactions with the programme. In environments of the BC UKCC CL4 award, I suggest that the recurrent dialogues of core members of the Level 4 Board contributed to developing mutually agreed objectives and shared understandings (Blumer, 1946). These were effectively communicated and embedded within the programme delivery. It was evident from my engagements with BC that coaches were viewed as being mature learners, seen to contribute to advancing their and others' understandings (Strauss, 1959). As outlined in Chapter 5 Part B, an example of this informal learning were the free flowing discussions during residential events, which I observed at meal times and coffee breaks. Contrary to this, on the BJA UKCC CL4 award, it seemed as though coach learners were expected to adapt to the learning environments, delivery and assessment formats of HEi lecturers. At times, the course content was prescribed and not always context related (Chesterfield et al., 2010; Townsend and Cushion, 2017). As some of the data extracts presented in Chapter 5 Part A indicate, it was up to HEi staff to find the appropriate balance between postgraduate delivery and practitioner understandings. Indeed, interactions among managers and educators for the purpose of organisation, delivery and assessment were scarce and ended up limiting the potency of dialogues between these stakeholders. I continue to struggle to identify the reasons for this HEi emphasis of the BJA programme; however, it is difficult for me not to consider the confidence of key personnel in delivering and managing it. At no time, there was a clear sense of

purpose or mission used to help shape the expectations, inherent values and outcomes of those involved with the BJA UKCC CL4 award.

Upon reflection, I suggest that the diverse nature of the UKCC CL4 award contributed to shaping its value in diverse ways. Overall, the participants in this study referred to the value in terms of two main considerations: the award as a process and as an outcome. Indeed, the UKCC CL4 award represented a significant learning process for those involved with it. This applied to coach learners, who completed the postgraduate study; to coach educators, who were challenged to incorporate real life scenarios with the often theoretical, research-informed understandings; and coach education managers, who were tasked to oversee these processes. In line with findings by Galvan et al. (2012), Jones et al. (2003), Mesquita et al. (2014) and Reade et al. (2008a; 2008b), the learning from experts in the field was particularly valued when it was seen as being supportive of coaches in their day-to-day work. Further to this, the participants seemed to value the PG Dip as an academic outcome. As I hope to have emphasised in Chapter 5 Part C, while participants cited developmental aspects as being fruitful, the academic outcome was of equal significance to contemplations of professional progression.

When asked why they valued the UKCC CL4 award, stakeholders often mentioned these process- and outcome-orientated views. Over the course of my fieldwork, I recognised that the longitudinal nature of the course led to feelings of belonging among those involved in UKCC CL4 cohorts (Chapter 5 Part B). Coaches in particular, saw this wider benefit of adult learning. Contrary to practitioners in a study by Townsend and Cushion (2017), coach learners demonstrated a preparedness to learn from the novel content they encountered on the UKCC CL4 award. The engagement

with postgraduate study over a prolonged period was particularly valuable to those, who had little or no experience with HE. This longer-term engagement helped coaches to increase gradually their competence and confidence when faced with academic practice (Galvan et al., 2012; Mallett and Dickens, 2009). In fact, the participants in my study suggested that practitioners across levels and sports would advance their approaches to coaching from an engagement with research-informed understandings developed on this award and others like it. The subsequent outcomes of the CL4 course were considered markers of esteem and credibility for coaches as well as for coaching as a profession. I would argue that the external value of coaches engaging with HEi is important, since allied professions (e.g. sport science) as well as the public may view these new relationships as an indication of professionalism and maturity in sports coaching.

The perceived impact of the UKCC CL4 award was interconnected with these feelings of value. Those involved with it at the time of this research, had recognised the course as impactful to the conduct and perceived competence of coaching practitioners. To coaches, this became apparent when they began to embed new research-informed understandings in their work with athletes. While coaches often felt that their learning confirmed the tacit knowledge they had developed from years of coaching, in line with the comments presented in Chapter 5 Part A, they regarded the new research-informed insights as advancing of existing understandings. Yet, learning in a sense that it establishes new behaviours may take time to emerge. For many coaches, the postgraduate learning pushed the boundaries of what they felt capable to accomplish and it required gradual adaptations to course content for learning to manifest itself in coaches' perceptions (Strauss, 1959). It could be suggested that the potency of

completing the UKCC CL4 award will not always be evident immediately after delivery, nor will the individual coach necessarily be aware of when and how learning impacts practice.

Contrary to reports by authors, such as Chesterfield et al. (2010), Townsend and Cushion (2017), the stakeholders in my study commented that their involvement in the award helped them challenge longstanding and strongly held assumptions. In this respect, the award was considered impactful as a process of transformation (Mezirow, 1997), with particular importance being attached to its longitudinal and postgraduate nature. As I hope to have portrayed in the comments presented in the latter half of Chapter 5 Part C, the completion of a PG Dip enhanced coaches' sense of kudos as full-time practitioners, particularly when engaging with those, who were unaware of the intricacies of sports coaching. Such strengthened feelings of competence and confidence formed their commitment to responsibilities not only as coaches, but also as coach educators at levels 1-3 in the UKCC scheme. In fact, stakeholders offered that, over time, this cascading of novel understandings was to influence coaching practice outside the settings of the UKCC CL4 award.

Factors that shaped this perceived impact were recognised in the different situations in which everyday coaching practice took place (Cooley, 1907). Coach educators and coach education managers considered it challenging coaches to feed their learning into the wider practice of professional environments, where superiors did not share an openness to conduct that deviated from existing norms (Cooley, 1910). In fact, participants referred to an "anti-intellectualisation" that appeared to prevail among those in such leadership positions (Cushion et al., 2017; Nash and Sproule, 2012). An awareness of this coaching landscape led coaches to act in a self-directed manner and

focus on affecting those areas in their lives, where they believed research-informed understandings and postgraduate qualifications to be seen as useful and valuable.

These understandings stem from the insights I have gained into these experiences of coaches, coach educators and coach education managers involved with the UKCC CL4 award, which I presented in chapter 5 Parts A, B and C. Certainly, their experiences have been diverse. Upon reflection, I suggest that they have been dependent on the particular award that stakeholders were involved with, their expectations of it and their wider beliefs about education and learning. I suggest that it was useful for so many participants to complete the course with limited prior academic knowledge and a degree of openness towards postgraduate level study. Arguably, this facilitated the formation of new and transformation of existing understandings. Further to this, from my engagements with stakeholders it became evident that the perceptions were shaped significantly by the interactions that occurred within situations of the UKCC CL4 award. This became apparent from the regularity and openness in dialogues found within the BC UKCC CL4 award (see Chapter 5 Part A and B), which prompted stakeholders and myself to feel involved, accepted and confident with regard to our roles and responsibilities. This was particularly marked in comparison to the limited dialogues observed during the BJA UKCC CL4 award. This contrast made it even more evident how important it was for coach education managers to liaise regularly with educators and learners for the continuous development of the programme.

As an exemplar of good practice, I consider the focus of BC Level 4 Board members on interweaving “formal” learning with expert practitioner knowledge. By adopting dual roles as course organisers and facilitators of learning, these key individuals have embedded opportunities of interactive learning in the mediated context found on the

BC UKCC CL4 award (He et al., 2018; Irwin et al., 2004). It became evident that the UKCC CL4 coaches saw their participation in different learning formats as being crucial (e.g. Erickson et al., 2007; He et al., 2018; Jones et al., 2003; 2004; Werthner and Trudel, 2009). Similar to participants in studies by Araya et al. (2015) and Galvan et al. (2012), coaches in this study considered it significant to perceived learning for HEi lecturers and GB coach educators to view learners as active contributors to coach education. This was equally important as the self-directed engagements of coaches with award content, assessments and their professional interactions with peer learners and educators. In unison, this underpinned the perception of the UKCC CL4 award as being a valuable and impactful experience with long-term benefits.

One of the advantages of aligning my work within the interpretivist paradigm was that I came to know a number of unplanned considerations throughout my fieldwork. For the purpose of the UKCC CL4 award, individual GBs and HEis as separate professional entities with established practices and particular histories have come together to facilitate the award (Shibutani, 1955; Strauss, 1959). It is apparent that for these new collaborations to flourish, stakeholders need to liaise with one another with openness and honesty to prepare for any effective award organisation, delivery and assessment. It is important for these key stakeholders to abide by shared expectations and responsibilities, which need to be clearly articulated to the HEi and GB involved. Examples of where this has and has not happened became apparent from my parallel immersion in the BC and BJA UKCC CL4 awards. Although, I did not ask explicitly about the differences between these two programmes, naturally I have drawn comparisons. At the time of my study, it appeared that there was limited long-term planning in the management and delivery of the BJA UKCC CL4 award. Without a management group

in place to deal with overseeing the course, the BJA UKCC CL4 award seemed held back by *ad-hoc* management and it lacked clearly stated objectives. In comparison, the nature of management and delivery on the BC UKCC CL4 award profited significantly from having a Level 4 Board in place. Its members completed their individual award-related responsibilities while continuously conversing with one another. Crucial to this, I believe, were the shared histories of those involved in the planning and organisation of the UKCC CL4 award as well as a culture inherent in BC that pointed towards a recognition of learning as a lifelong and idiosyncratic endeavour (Werthner and Trudel, 2009). From my experiences of two different courses, I conclude that the time and effort that managers and educators invested shaped the nature of the UKCC CL4 award, coaches' experiences with it and their perceptions of its value and impact.

At this point, the reader might contemplate how these insights differ from the suggestions that authors set forth in the studies of high performance coach education and learning presented in Chapter 3. The research underpinning my arguments is novel based on the methodologically and theoretically informed longitudinal research with not only coaches, but also coach educators and coach education managers in the imminent environments of the UKCC CL4 award. Sports Coach UK implicitly supported my study that required the GBs and HEIs involved entering our collaboration with an open mind. Indeed, I understand from my conversations with Susan that my study was the first of its kind in that scUK supported a researcher from a HEi external to the UKCC CL4 award to experience first-hand its day-to-day realities and conduct longitudinal research. In this respect, I consider my work significant because I approached the practitioner contexts of high performance coach education with an openness and attention to recurring, conflicting as well as mundane observations. I consider these

attitudes new in a landscape, where some researchers of the studies I reviewed appear to have emphasised solely what was wrong with high performance coach education (e.g. Chesterfield et al., 2010; Jones and Allison, 2014; Townsend and Cushion, 2017). Contrary to this, I was keen to understand key features of good practice to make informed suggestions for academics and practitioners.

At the core of this have been the relationships that I developed with the coaches, who completed the UKCC CL4 award, the coach educators delivering it and the coach education managers, who acted as gatekeepers to my fieldwork. I believe that my research builds on findings such as those articulated by Araya et al. (2015) and Galvan et al. (2012) by demonstrating that instances of postgraduate “formal” coach education can be social, potent and personalised. For this to occur, it is important that the stakeholders involved in its organisation and delivery pursue shared objectives and view themselves as facilitators, not prescribers, of learning. I wish to return to the thinking of Blumer (1969) and Mead (1934), who emphasised the importance of continuity in our interpersonal encounters, if we desire to not only establish, but also maintain mutually understood conduct. This is of importance to the UKCC CL4 award. In fact, I am confident that the significance of my research lies in the in-depth study of the new relationships that GBs and HEIs have established for the purpose of postgraduate high performance coach education. While others have published work on this in some capacity (e.g. Araya et al., 2015; Galvan et al., 2012; Townsend and Cushion, 2017), I understand that only in my research have I as the principle investigator embedded myself in environments of the UKCC CL4 award alongside stakeholders in GBs, HEIs and scUK.

With this in mind, I offer that my study is significant due to an emphasis on bridging the gap often perceived between academic research and practitioner interests. I would argue that my 18-month long immersion in the field of UKCC CL4 environments enabled rich insights that I have gained from my engagements with not only the coaches, who completed the CL4 award, but also the coach educators and coach education managers, who delivered and organised it. Indeed, it was of equal importance for me to work at doctoral level, while developing relevant recommendations for coach education developers. For this reason, I believe that there is an element of transferability in the study findings that foreground the importance of relationships, which we need to establish and uphold as academics and practitioners. Only if we develop open, trusting and stable relationships with and among stakeholders will we truly be able to inform the ongoing development of coach education in the UK.

Implications and recommendations for consideration

Returning to the notion of impact, the following pages will outline some implications and recommendations for practice and suggest not only where this research has taken us, but also how others might wish to move it forwards. There is of course some friction between the recommendations for practitioners and setting an academic research agenda. Academic efforts to inform our understanding are often guided by personal agendas and disciplinary commitments (Lyle and Cushion, 2017). While this may well help us excel in the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and allow us to embed ourselves in discipline security, it does distance our research from the day-to-day realities of coaching and coach education. I hope that the relationships I built in the field have helped to protect this divide in some small way. With this in mind, I wish to outline what I consider relevant to those involved in the organisation, management and delivery of such provision.

Addressing those involved with the BC UKCC CL4 award:

The BC UKCC CL4 award signified an exemplar in terms of clarity and structure. As outlined in Chapter 5 Part A, it became apparent over the course of my fieldwork that Lisa, Harry, Evelyn and other colleagues, who were responsible for the design and ongoing development of the BC UKCC CL4 award, recognised the importance of collaborative efforts. I encourage Lisa, who was the Level 4 Programme Director at the time of my study and fellow Level 4 Board members to continue the “best practice” they demonstrated when interacting with each other, coach educators and coach learners. Their openness spilled over into the atmospheres during residential delivery

days and led coach learners and me to experience welcoming environments. In addition to the commitment of these key individuals, I believe that the breadth of experiences and responsibilities in differing professional fields enriches their decision-making. In turn, as suggested in Chapter 5 Part B in my recollections of the award nature, I propose that this approach to the organisation of coach education has supported a tailoring of the BC UKCC CL4 award towards postgraduate expectations and practitioner experiences.

Addressing those involved with the BJA UKCC CL4 award:

Over the course of my fieldwork on the BJA UKCC CL4 award, it appeared that coaches' study at SHU was seen as an opportunity to recruit students for the Masters degree in Advanced Coaching Practice. While this was not an issue in itself, it affected how coaches viewed their learning. It led many to place emphasis on award results rather than the continuous process of learning. For instance, in Chapter 5 Part C, I outlined Marcus' opinions in this respect, a CL4 learner, who considered his learning only fully accomplished upon graduation from the Masters degree, which he hoped to complete at SHU. I would see some connection between this emphasis on the postgraduate outcomes and the manner in which the BJA CL4 award was managed. It seemed that there was no established platform for sharing best practice between SHU and the BJA. Nicole, who seemed to be the sole manager to oversee the organisation of residential delivery days and to coordinate timetabled sessions, received little support from peers in SHU or partners in the BJA to help develop a robust interweaving of academic study with examples from coaching practice. With the recent demise of scUK (now UK

Coaching) in terms of funding and capacity, it seems unlikely that opportunities will be forthcoming to facilitate this level of interaction.

Recommendations for collaborations of GBs and HEIs:

Addressing GBs and HEIs, I advise that it is most important for those responsible for the management of coach education, to plan and commit to recurrent discussions. This allows the parties involved to articulate their goals and seek ways to interweave HE priorities and GB interests with the expectations of scUK (now UK Coaching). This study allowed me to gain insight into two coach education programmes that were run in different ways. As suggested overleaf and in Chapter 5 Part B, it was crucial to the success of the BC UKCC CL4 award for Lisa and her colleagues to communicate continuously with BC and UoS educators as well as coach learners. The opportunity to network with others from current and previous cohorts helped the stakeholders involved to develop a sense of community and belonging. In light of this, I consider it of importance to develop and follow a continuous agenda, where unceasing improvement is sought within structural and financial limits. To this end, it is crucial to have management groups in place with clear leadership and responsibilities, who communicate regularly with national agencies, internal markets and potential learners.

Implications for academic study in formal high performance coach education:

I prompt coach education developers to listen to the voices of those, who are involved with postgraduate provision and to be aware of the shifting political landscape in HEIs. Although I have been critical about some delivery and assessment formats on the UKCC CL4 award, I also spoke to HEi lecturers, who saw value in contextualising

theoretical delivery with scenarios relevant to coaching practitioners (e.g. Theo, Tyler and Evelyn, whose perspectives on this topic I presented in Chapter 5 Part A). This was considered important for the success of their delivery, for coaches' assessment results and perceptions learning. These academics recognised that the interweaving of postgraduate study with coach education has the potency to be impactful in the personal and professional lives of those, who complete the UKCC CL4 award. In line with the suggestions set forth in Chapter 5 Part C, moving forward, I believe that the intellectualisation of formal coach education, which the UKCC CL4 award tenders, is critical to implementing research-informed coaching practice across levels and sporting domains. I suggest that this relevant to conversations regarding the development of sports coaching as a profession and, ultimately, to advancing the quality of coaching in the UK (Piggott, 2012; 2015; Taylor and Garratt, 2008; 2010).

So, what about the “effectiveness” of high performance coach education?

The origins of my PhD research, which I presented in greater depth in Chapter 2, lie in a call from scUK for Manchester Metropolitan University and my department to conduct field-based research into the effectiveness of the UKCC CL4 award. Although Susan and Michael, two of the scUK managers whom I wrote about more extensively in chapter 4, knew that it was difficult to measure effectiveness via improvement of coach-athlete interactions or sports performance, they both expressed that others, often those in management positions in their organisation, appeared to hold on to this expectation. As my research has shown, however, this is a false assumption; we can only hint at changes in the practices and understandings of coaches. As I hope to have demonstrated in Chapter 5, stakeholders spoke of different ways in which the UKCC

CL4 award could be considered “effective”. To some coaches, such as Dan, who described the CL4 process as ‘...amazingly powerful...’, the course could be considered effective in that he developed ways to draw on theoretical understandings when resolving issues encountered in coaching practice. Other coaches, such as Connor and Marcus, recognised effectiveness in the UKCC CL4 award as a milestone in preparing for a Masters degree. Suggestions by the education managers Harry and Lisa in Chapter 5 Part C on the cascading of information could be viewed as another exemplar of the effectiveness of the UKCC CL4 award. Yet, the direct improvement in athlete performance resisted testing and categorisation. I am confident, however, that the UKCC CL4 award is valuable, valued and impactful to those, who engage with it. It is making a difference and sometimes transforms the manner in which practitioners think about coach education and about the value given to research-informed inquiry and practice.

Based on the considerations I have outlined in this and the preceding chapters, I suggest that there are questions that merit further exploration. I offer the following in no order of priority because there will be differing levels of awareness and interest for each sport or research group. Researchers may wish to consider:

- i. What do we know about the education, development and management of an effective coach education workforce?
- ii. How can we support the development of a body of experienced and capable coach educators and coach education managers to inform and enhance the ability of individual GBs to staff and inform their UKCC CL4 award?

- iii. What is the future of the UKCC CL4 award if the continuing withdrawal of resources from scUK (now UK Coaching) affects their ability to develop and steer the UKCC scheme? Without central backing, will the sports themselves return to a diverse range of in-house provision?

Some comments on my theoretical and methodological choices

I will now revisit some theoretical and methodological considerations to comment on the opportunities and challenges inherent in the choices I have made over the course of my research. I have drawn predominately on the work of symbolic interactionists to make sense of the data gathered throughout my fieldwork. My use of sociological theorisation to interpret field-based experiences is novel in this particular research landscape, where limited in-depth studies have been published to date on the complexities associated with high performance coach education and learning (e.g. Chesterfield et al., 2010; Consterdine et al., 2013; Townsend and Cushion, 2017).

While these publications have addressed issues of high performance coach education in different sporting domains, they were neither longitudinal in nature nor ethnographic in methodological application. Thus, I would argue that the insights that have accrued from my own work, have allowed me to be more in tune to the fluctuations in commitment and resourcing, which often represent features of the management of high performance coach education programmes. I am confident to suggest that this allows both novelty and significance. A key aspect of the novelty is that I conducted the research process, working alongside the coach learners and coach educators, who were consuming and delivering the UKCC CL4 award. I would say that I was working with them, not on them (Deegan, 2001; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Prus, 1996). In addition, I had the explicit permission from key stakeholders to conduct this research, which allowed me to access discussions that may not have been available without an immersion in the everyday settings of the UKCC CL4 award (Atkinson, 2017; Ellis, 2004).

The significance of my work is that I have applied symbolic interactionism as both a theoretical and research methodological lens. It has guided my interactions, thoughts and considerations. I have actively avoided using it solely as a tool of convenience to make sense of my data. Rather, it has been a constant companion that allowed me to view the research process and my role in it with new clarity. In my reading of traditional symbolic interactionist texts, most authors alluded to the importance of individuals, their interactions and the diverse meanings they defined from intra- and interpersonal processes. I am happy, as much as one can be that these choices have provided me with a strong lens to make sense of the research and the fieldwork data. Although other interpretive approaches (e.g. Goffman's dramaturgical interpretation of everyday life) and symbolic interactionist theories, such as those by Stryker (1980) or McCall and Simmons (1978), may have been useful to interpret my research experiences, ultimately, I felt most confident to marry my interpretivist thinking with the ideas of situational symbolic interactionist work. With this, I believe that my work is contributing to a wider research agenda that endeavours to draw upon sociological theorisation to investigate in-depth the complex processes that shape high performance coach education and learning (Stodter and Cushion, 2014; Townsend et al., 2015).

I warmed towards using a bricolage of the work I had read, which I regard as an approach that suited my emergent interpretivist thinking and my interpretations of symbolic interactionism. I suggest that my use of theoretical concepts from texts authored at varied stages in the development of symbolic interactionism, created a flexibility to balance theoretical perspectives with the ways in which I interpreted situations on the UKCC CL4 award. At times, however, I felt challenged in my

interpretivist thinking, particularly when reading Mead's (1934) text, where I recognised in some passages a seeming leaning towards positivist interpretations of social life (McPhail and Rexroat, 1979; Plummer, 2000). In fact, I progressed slowly through Mead's and Cooley's texts also due to the language the theorists had used. In some respect, their writing style seemed outdated in comparison to more recent work (e.g. Blumer, 1969; Fine, 1979; Strauss, 1959). I was unfamiliar with certain vocabulary that Cooley and Mead used and I often doubted whether my English proficiency would suffice to understand this theoretical writing. In such instances, it was useful to draw on the work of Blumer (1969), Holstein and Gubrium (2000) and Strauss (1959), for instance, which appeared to provide more clarity in the arguments that authors articulated.

I recognised, however, that my use of this symbolic interactionist work, in which authors placed emphasis on process-orientated contemplations of social life, did not facilitate in-depth interpretations of structural and macro-social issues (e.g. Fine, 1993). While I offered tentative contemplations in Chapter 5 Part C, I understand that this was not the primary focus in my interpretive study; however, I believe that it is an important contemplation for others, who consider using situational symbolic interactionist writing in studies of the structures inherent in sports coaching. With this in mind, I understand that the symbolic interactionist work I have drawn upon has its limitations; after all, it is difficult to ignore that those individual interactions are not only shaped by different life histories and assumptions, but also operate within wider social structures. I wish to emphasise, however, that the body of theoretical writing that I have used has been useful to interpret the individual and shared perspectives of

different stakeholders in my explorative study *of* and *with* coaches, coach educators and coach education managers on the UKCC CL4 award.

To this end, I valued the ethnographically inspired nature of my research. Throughout my fieldwork, I balanced my role as a quiet observer within delivery and assessment situations with my interactive conduct during informal conversations with participants (Brannick and Coughlan, 2007). Although I did not consider myself as being truly ethnographic as I was not participating in the UKCC CL4 award as a coach learner, educator or manager, I drew on my experiences with and alongside these stakeholders to understand their perspectives in greater depth. Having embraced this view, I felt assured when I read my supervisors' comments in regard of this methodological choice; I wrote:

Bill and I spoke about my "ethnographically inspired" research from the start of my PhD. I feel I know what it means to me. I can explain it. This is why I do not want to change it to "fieldwork" in my thesis. I appreciate the feedback of my other supervisors. Yes, I conducted in fieldwork, but also I became part of CL4 cohorts for 18 months. I cheered for their success and felt for their struggle. While I did not complete CL4 assessments, stakeholders knew me. I was somehow one of them. I did inform my thinking with interpretations of methodological work on ethnography. I implemented suggestions in consideration of the nature of my involvement in the award, time and my finances. At this stage, I would like to continue referring to my "ethnographically inspired" study and am happy with that term and what it mean to me. (Reflexive notes written in February 2018)

There has been value in considering the remarks of others and balancing these with my own. In doing so, I have grown increasingly comfortable with the decisions I have made over the course of my research. Of particular value, has been the keeping of reflexive notes, which led me to become confident to write "publically" about my private thoughts, fears and emotions (see Chapter 4). I experienced a significant moment to letting go of my barriers in March 2017, when I was writing a blog about

the challenges I have faced when conducting my PhD fieldwork (Appendix 1). Indeed, this was the first written piece in which I openly articulated how I felt at certain points throughout my research and my life. I believe that my reflexivity has enabled me to [re]position myself, to understand myself a little more and to recognise why I think in certain ways as a person and as a researcher.

Lastly, this skate comes to an end.

I have little doubt that the period when I have conducted this research and ultimately completed my PhD, has been transformative. I have changed. For me, becoming more confident and self-aware has not been a linear process - it has been both interruptive and interrupted. While the changes that I have experienced are ongoing, I now feel more confident and more “me”. I feel that the ice is thicker under my feet and I am more assured in my self-declaration as an interpretive and reflexive researcher.

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Appendix 1: Taylor & Francis guest blog

I used sections of this Taylor & Francis guest blog in chapter 1 of my PhD thesis¹⁰:

Qualitative fieldwork as a doctoral researcher: “Skating on thin ice.”

In September 2014, I started my doctoral research on high performance coach education in the UK. The idea was to conduct ethnographic fieldwork to explore the perceptions of those, who deliver and consume the programmes. With my supervisors’ support, I launched myself into the project yet I did not expect how challenging the first 18 months of fieldwork would be.

“Hello. I am a figure skater. My name is Petra. I was born in Croatia. I am living in Austria.”

I was two years old when, in 1991, my parents aimed to escape their troubles by moving from their birth country, with my sister and me, to start a better life in Austria. Growing up, we spoke Croatian and practised Croatian traditions, however, in public, it was important to my parents that my sister and I fit in. I learned German as my second mother tongue, I visited a private school and I engaged in hobbies, one of which, figure skating, it became everything. By the time I was twelve years old, my training was 15-20 hours per week. I defined myself as a figure skater, it was the one thing I called myself besides explaining that I am a Croatian living in Austria.

“From figure skater to the girl that’s different to the woman, who felt she can’t do it.”

In 2013, I moved to the UK to further my studies. I noticed I was different to other girls, but I thought, “You’re an international, spending most of your childhood at ice rinks. Of course you’re different.” When I started to conduct my fieldwork, however, this feeling of being different turned into an overwhelming sensation. At my first data

¹⁰ This blog can be visited also on <https://authorservices.taylorandfrancis.com/from-figure-skater-to-doctoral-researcher/>.

collection weekend, I missed the enthusiasm I experienced when I had first planned my fieldwork. I was now feeling lonely, isolated, and sometimes so lethargic that I struggled to function on the day before a fieldwork trip. “What is wrong with me?” I asked myself whenever I sensed panic arising inside my chest. While the structured and planned life I had led since childhood had made me a highly organised individual, it had also embedded a strong drive towards perfection. It was the sense of being out of control that frightened me. Gradually, I realised what had seemed like a normal way to approach life had become the biggest hurdle in completing my PhD.

[The lessons I have learned.](#)

After months of low mood and self-pity on days of data collection, I questioned myself, “Who am I? Who do I want to be beyond the figure skater Petra?” I had to admit to myself that I was responsible for not moving past the role of a figure skater when I ended my sporting career. As an athlete, my parents had allowed me to remain in a bubble, where the sole focus was to strive for “best performances”. Unfortunately, I have taken this to an obsessive level, raising the expectations of who I am and the work I do to an unachievable standard. I now realise that my PhD fieldwork forced me to take things as they come. It triggered something inside me that initially embarrassed me. I learned, however, that my actions are not always about delivering “perfect” results. Today, I see my PhD fieldwork as a journey that allowed me to research a topic I am passionate about. Most importantly, however, it prompted me to face my inner sense of belonging and turn barriers into features that make me who I am, Petra, who was a figure skater.



MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

MMU Cheshire

Department of Exercise and Sport Science

Information Sheet for Participants

Title of Study: High performance coach education: A symbolic interactionist perspective

Ethics Committee Reference Number: 16.12.14(i)

1) This is an invitation to take part in a piece of research.

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Please take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

2) What is the purpose of the research?

The United Kingdom Coaching Certificate (UKCC) scheme has been in a process of continuous development and change since its introduction in the early 2000s. Since then, the delivery and the impact that the UKCC may have on the coaching practice has not yet been assessed in depth. The highest level of the UKCC (UKCC Coach Level 4 [UKCC

CL4]) has received limited attention so far. Coaches, who have completed programmes similar to the UKCC CL4, perceive such formal coach education as not useful for their daily practice. Therefore, in order to feed into the development of coach education in the UK, the overall focus of the proposed research is to conduct an in-depth study of the UKCC CL4 from the perspectives of those stakeholders involved in it.

3) Why is the study being performed?

The study is being performed because Sports Coach UK (scUK), the organising body of the UKCC, has raised an interest in gaining insight into the realities of the UKCC CL4. As scUK aims to provide UK coaches with the best education to help their athletes to success, they would like to investigate the perceptions of UKCC CL4 coaches, educators, and managers to improve formal coach education in the UK and provide coaches with the knowledge they can apply into daily practice.

4) Why am I being asked to take part?

You have been invited to participate in the study as you are currently contributing to a UKCC CL4 programme (e.g. as a coach learner, educator, or manager) in your respective sport and thereby meet the criteria of participation.

5) Do I have to take part?

You are under no obligation to take part in this study. If, after reading this information sheet and asking any additional questions, you do not feel comfortable taking part in the study you do not have to. If you do decide to take part you are free to withdraw from the study at any point, without having to give a reason. If you do withdraw from the study you are free to take any personal data with you, following written request to the principal investigator, and this will not be included when the research is reported. If you decide not to take part or withdraw from the study it will not affect your relationship with any of the staff at the Manchester Metropolitan University.

If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign an informed consent form stating your agreement to take part and you will be given a copy together with this information sheet to keep.

6) What will happen to me if I agree to take part?

You will be involved in the research for 12-18 months, which is the data collection part of a 36-month project. You will be in contact with the researcher during your attendance at six to seven UKCC CL4 events (e.g. observations, naturally occurring conversations). In order to receive a better understanding of your perceptions and your personal background, the researcher will invite you to take part in interviews outside the UKCC CL4 seminar in an environment of your choice. The meetings with the researcher will vary in duration, depending on the type of data collection (interview [20 to 90 minutes] or field observation [20 to 120 minutes]).

The researcher will ask your consent for audio recording of interviews, however, you can be assured that the recordings will be handled confidentially and your identity will stay protected. In order to ensure this, the researcher will code all data collected.

7) Are there any disadvantages or risks in taking part?

There will be no particular risks or disadvantages of participation. If you feel uncomfortable about speaking of certain issues, you are more than welcome to express your discomfort and the researcher will not address the topic any more.

8) What are the possible benefits of taking part?

It is unlikely you will experience any direct benefits by taking part in this research. However, the information gained from this study will help to increase the understanding of high performance coach education in the UK.

9) Who are the members of the research team?

The members of the research team are;

Myself, Petra Kolić	Principal investigator and PhD student
Dr Bill Taylor	Director of Studies
Dr Ryan Groom	PhD supervisor
Dr Lee Nelson	PhD supervisor

10) Who is funding the research?

The project is self-funded by the principal investigator.

11) Who will have access to the data?

All information, which is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential, and any information about you which leaves the university will have your name and address removed so that you cannot be recognised. During the research process, your data will be stored safely – a master list, identifying participants to the research codes will be held on a password-protected computer accessed only by the principal investigator. The audiotaped interview recordings will be stored on a password-protected computer, known only by the researcher. The data will be accessed by the principal researcher, however, the members of the supervisory team (see no. 9) will have permission to examine the data. The data will be used for a doctoral thesis and potentially for publication and future studies and will be destroyed three years after completion of the current project.

12) Who do I contact if I feel my rights have been violated?

Registrar & Clerk to the Board of Governors, Head of Governance and Secretariat Team
Manchester Metropolitan University, All Saints Building, All Saints
Manchester, M15 6BH

Tel: 0161 247 1390

I confirm that the insurance policies in place at Manchester Metropolitan University will cover claims for negligence arising from the conduct of the University's normal business, which includes research carried out by staff and by undergraduate and postgraduate students as part of their course. This does not extend to clinical negligence.

13) Finally, a thank you!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your cooperation and consideration to participate in the study. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate and contact me (Petra Kolić, principal investigator) – I have provided my contact details below.

Kind Regards,

Petra Kolić BSc MSc

PhD Research Student

Department of Exercise and Sport Science, MMU Cheshire

Crewe Green Road, Crewe, Cheshire, CW1 5DU

Tel.: +44 (0) 161 247 5155

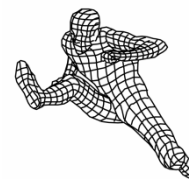
Email: P.Kolic@mmu.ac.uk

Appendix 3: Informed Consent Form (ICF)



Department of Exercise and Sport Science

Informed Consent Form



Name of Participant:

Principal Investigator: Petra Kolić

Project Title: *High performance coach education: A symbolic interactionist perspective*

Ethics Committee Approval Number: 16.12.14(i)

Participant Statement

I have read the participant information sheet for this study and understand what is involved in taking part. Any questions I have about the study, or my participation in it, have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I do not have to take part and that I may decide to withdraw from the study at any point without giving a reason. Any concerns I have raised regarding this study have been answered and I understand that any further concerns that arise during the time of the study will be addressed by the investigator. I therefore agree to participate in the study.

It has been made clear to me that, should I feel that my rights are being infringed or that my interests are otherwise being ignored, neglected or denied, I should inform the The University Secretary and Clerk to the Board of Governors, Manchester Metropolitan University, Ormond Building, Manchester, M15 6BX. Tel: 0161 247 3400 who will undertake to investigate my complaint.

Signed (Participant)

Date

Signed (Investigator)

Date

Appendix 4: Informed Consent Form for Interviews

Department of Exercise and Sport Science

Informed Consent for Involvement in Interviews

(Both the investigator and participant should retain a copy of this form)

Name of Participant:

Principal Investigator: Petra Kolić

Project Title: *High performance coach education: A symbolic interactionist perspective*

Ethics Committee Approval Number: 16.12.14(i)

Participant Statement

I have read the participant information sheet for this study and understand what is involved in taking part. Any questions I have about the study, or my participation in it, have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I do not have to take part and that I may decide to withdraw from the study at any point without giving a reason.

I am aware that I am entitled to stop the recording of the interview at any time if I feel the subject matter has become too sensitive for me to discuss. I am also aware that I am entitled to stop the interview entirely should I wish to.

Any concerns I have raised regarding this study have been answered and I understand that any further concerns that arise during the time of the study will be addressed by the investigator. I have also been informed of the availability of a post interview debriefing service via the MMU counselling service. I therefore agree to participate in the study.

I agree to allow the interview to be recorded.

YES ☐ **NO** ☐

I agree to allow direct quotations to be used.

YES ☐ **NO** ☐

I wish my identity to remain anonymous.

YES ☐ **NO** ☐

Signed (Participant)

Date

Signed (Investigator)

Date

Appendix 5: Interview guide (Perceptions of UKCC CL4 award)

Reiterate what this project is about. Explain how the interview is going to run. Double check participant is happy to be audio recorded.

1) Tell me about yourself.

2) Can you tell me a little bit more about your motivation to become a coach?

Prompts (if required):

- On how many years of experience as a coach can you look back?
- Could you give me some more information on the coaching positions and roles you took on in your coaching career?
- Can you tell me more about the reasons for becoming a full-time coach?
- How do you manage your job as a full-time coach?
- Can you tell me more about the reasons for having a full-time job as well as working as a coach?
- Can you give me a little bit more detail on the reasons for the decisions you made concerning your coaching career?
- If you think about your life outside the sporting context, how did your coaching career influence other areas of your life?

3) Can you tell me more about your coach education pathway?

- Are you employed within a sport that has endorsed the UKCC scheme?
- If so, where are you currently in the UKCC pathway?
- Thinking about your future as a coach, what are your aspirations?
- To clarify this question, could you give me a little more detail on your goals as a sports coach?
- What would you like to achieve as a person, as a coach, as a club member, from your athletes' point of view?

3) GB, scUK – Tell me a little bit about the pathway that led to your position today.

- On how many years of experience can you look back in this area of work?
- What roles and positions did you hold before attending your current position?
- Do you look back on a background in coaching too?
- If so, can you tell me a little bit more about it?
- On how many years of experience as a coach can you look back?
- Could you give me some more information on the coaching positions and roles you took on in your coaching career?
- Can you give me a little bit more detail on the reasons for the decisions you made concerning your coaching career?

- 4) Multiple roles – Can you tell me more about the multiple roles that you hold?
 - How has your career as a coach influenced your current job?
 - How do you manage the different roles you take on?
 - How do you feel about these roles?
 - Why do you think this way?
- 5) Tell me more about your perceptions of formal coach education in the UK.
 - Do you believe that the UKCC is suitable to equip coaches with the knowledge and skills they need in their daily work?
 - Why do you think this way?
- 6) Tell me more about your perceptions of the UKCC CL4 in particular.
 - By which criteria do you judge the UKCC CL4?
 - To which conclusions do you come when you judge the UKCC CL4 by the defined criteria?
 - Do you consider the UKCC CL4 a success?
 - If so, can you give me a little bit more information on what makes you think this way?
- 7) The UKCC scheme was developed in order to create a more standard coaching system in UK. What do you think of a standardised coach education scheme on high performance level such as the UKCC CL4?
 - Research looking into formal coach education critiques the value of standardised coach education on a high-performance level. Do you agree that high-performance coach education should be rather individualised than standardised? Why do you think so?
 - As a coach, in which ways have you profited from standardised formal coach education so far?
 - Can you give me more detail on your opinion?
 - What are the reasons for your opinion on standardised formal coach education?
- 8) Tell me about your perceived impact of the UKCC CL4 programme.
 - When you would regard something as impactful?
 - Keeping your definition of impact in mind, do you believe that the coach education courses you attended have had an impact on you?
 - If so, could you tell me a little bit more about how it impacted you (e.g. your work, your encounters with others)?
 - Can you tell me about how you think of impact from your engagement with the UKCC CL4 award?
 - How does this manifest itself in your professional and personal life?
 - Why do you think this way?

- Can you give me some examples?
 - How did formal coach education impact on other areas of your life outside the sporting context?
 - How do you feel when you have another CL4 residential event coming up?
 - What makes you think and feel this way?
 - Does your contribution to the UKCC CL4 award affect your personal life?
 - If so, how?
 - Why do you think this way?
 - Can you describe to me how your family and significant others (e.g. close friends) think about your involvement in the CL4 award? Why do you think they view it this way?
- 9) What are your thoughts on the collaboration between Governing Bodies and Higher Education institutions (HEi)?
- How have you perceived this collaboration so far?
 - What has changed for you as a coach / coach educator / manager since you have been involved in a L4 course?
 - Why do you think this is the case?
 - Has something about your commitments outside the CL4 award changed since your involvement in the course?
 - Can you give me some examples?
 - Why do you think this way?
 - What do you think about the postgraduate nature of delivery and assessments on the CL4 award? Why do you think this way?
 - Do you believe that the collaboration of HEis and GBs has helped to bridge the perceived slippage from theory to practice? What makes you think this way?
 - Can you tell me of instances where you have experienced this?
- 10) What are your thoughts on the costs of the CL4 award? This could be the financial implications, but also time, resources, or other considerations that apply to you.
- Have you received financial support from a GB or HEi to complete / deliver / manage the CL4 award?
 - How does this make you feel?
 - Can you tell me a little bit more about your experiences?
- 11) Tell me about your perceptions of those, who deliver the UKCC CL4 award.
- HEi, GB – What are your experiences as an educator on the CL4 award?
 - Why do you think this way?
 - HEi, GB – Can you tell me a little bit more about the challenges and opportunities you have experienced as an educator on the CL4 award?
 - What makes you think this way?

- HEi, GB, scUK – Tell me about skills, considerations or perceptions that you consider significant for those to take, who deliver to coaches on the CL4 award.
 - What makes you think this way?
 - Can you give me examples of how this could be implemented?
 - Are there any challenges in doing this? If so, how could these be overcome?
- Coaches, scUK – Tell me a little bit more about your experiences with coach educators on the CL4 award.
 - What makes you think this way?
 - Can you tell me about instances of good practice?
 - What do you think are some of the challenges for HEi and GB coach educators on the CL4 award?
- Do you have any ideas how good practice can be made more consistent or how the challenges you have identified could be overcome?
- Who do you believe should deliver high performance coach education courses?
 - Why do you think this way?

12) Tell me more about what (and how) you value about the UKCC CL4.

- Are the coaching courses that you attend useful for your daily practice as a coach?
- Do you try to implement what you learned during coach education events in your practice as a coach?
- What would have to be different for you to use the information you learn in formal coach education on a daily basis?
- Do you regard different levels of coaching certificates as varying in its impact for daily practice?

13) Based on the experiences you made attending the UKCC CL4 programme, what are your suggestions for formal coach education in the UK?

- What changes would you suggest for high performance coach education in the UK to be perceived more impactful?
- Where do you see UK coach education in relation to coach education in other countries?

14) We have discussed the questions I have prepared for today. Is there anything you wish to add or any thoughts or perceptions you hope to expand on? I am more than happy to speak about your considerations in greater depth.

Once interviewee feels happy, thank them for their time. Offer interview transcript of the audio recording to participants.

Appendix 6: Interview guide (Impact of UKCC CL4 award)

If this interview follows a coaching practice observation, then thank them for the opportunity to visit their workplace first. Then, explain what this interview is about and how it will run. Double check coach is happy to be audio recorded.

If I did not visit coach in practice, then begin by explaining what this interview is about and how it will run. Double check coach is happy to be audio recorded.

- 1) How did you perceive today's / yesterday's session (or the day observed)?
- 2) In this particular session, did you purposefully apply elements you learned or confirmed from your engagement with the UKCC CL4 award?
 - Could you give me some examples?
 - Why did you draw on these particular considerations?
 - If not, looking back now, do you believe you have implemented aspects subconsciously?
 - Why did you draw on these particular considerations?
 - If not, why do you think you did not draw on insights gained from the CL4 award?
 - Do you feel that you are drawing on insights gained from the CL4 award in other areas? This could relate to your professional and personal life.
- 3) What impact do you perceive the CL4 award has had on you? This could be in coaching practice, preparation, interaction with other stakeholders as well as outside your professional life.
 - Can you give me some examples?
 - If none so far, moving forward, which impact are you hoping for?
 - In what ways do you wish to draw on CL4 understandings to shape your professional or personal life?
 - Why is this something you are hoping to do?
 - Can you give me some examples?
- 4) Have you attempted to implement any content from the CL4 award into your professional and personal life?
 - If so, how did you find this process?
 - Can you describe some of the opportunities and challenges to me?
 - Have you had any feedback from your athletes, colleagues or significant others in your private life?

- 5) Have you been given guidance within the course on how to integrate new material into your practice?
- If so, how have you perceived this?
 - If not, how do you think and feel about this?
- 6) We may have spoken about this before, however, for better understanding, I would like to speak about the learning environments and those, who create these learning environments.
- How have you perceived the learning environments in taught sessions during residential delivery days?
 - How have these learning environments impacted your engagement during taught session?
 - How have these learning environments impacted your perceptions of the module and the educator, who was delivering this session?
 - How have these learning environments impacted the perceived value of the topics discussed?
 - How have these learning environments impacted your perceptions of learning?
 - Tell me a little bit about the roles and responsibilities that you associate with the work of HEi and GB coach educators on the UKCC CL4 award.
 - Can you give me some examples?
 - Why do you think this way?
- 7) Let us talk about your confidence and confirmation as a coach. Has any element of the L4 course helped secure or added confirmation?
- Can you give me some examples?
 - Would you say that these feelings of confirmation could be related to the learning environments and your interactions with educators?
 - Can you explain this in a little bit more detail?
 - Why do you think this way?
- 8) As this is something, you may have noticed, however, does not necessarily lead to a change in behaviour, I am interesting in the following: Do you perceive that you have gained additional confidence from attending the L4?
- Can you give me some examples?
 - Would you say that your increased feelings of confidence are somehow related to the learning environments and your interactions with educators?
 - Can you explain this in a little bit more detail?
 - Why do you think this way?

9) What are your thoughts on “educating the educators” for the CL4 award?

- Do you have any suggestions as to how we could equip HEi and GB coach educators to deliver on the CL4 award?
- Can you give me some examples?
- What are the opportunities and challenges with this?
 - Why do you think so?
 - How could we make the most of opportunities?
 - What are your suggestions on overcoming the challenges you have identified?

10) We have discussed the questions I have prepared for today. Is there anything you wish to add or any thoughts or perceptions you hope to expand on? I am more than happy to speak about your considerations in greater depth.

Once interviewee feels happy, thank them for their time. Offer interview transcript of the audio recording to participants.

Appendix 7: List of research outputs

Insights gained from this research were disseminated at the following events:

Kolić, P., Groom, R., Nelson, L. and Taylor, W. G. (2017) 'The academic-ness of the UKCC CL4 award: Turning points, status passage, and identity'. Paper presented at the *11th ICCE Global Coach Conference*, Liverpool, United Kingdom. 31st July – 2nd August 2017.

Kolić, P. (2017) 'Qualitative fieldwork as a doctoral researcher: "Skating on thin ice."' Guest blog written for Taylor & Francis Author Services. 6th June 2017.
<http://authorservices.taylorandfrancis.com/category/insights/>

Kolić, P. and Taylor, W. G. (2017) 'The British Canoeing UKCC CL4 award – interim findings.' Interim report presented at the *British Canoeing Level 4 Board Meeting*, Gleneagles, United Kingdom. 20th January 2017.

Kolić, P., Groom, R., Nelson, L. and Taylor, W. G. (2016) 'From outsider to insider (?) Ethnographic observations of high performance coach education programmes in the UK.' In N. Clarke (Chair), *Coach learning*. Paper presented at the 5th International Conference for Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise, Chichester, United Kingdom. 30th August – 1st September 2016.

Kolić, P., Groom, R., Nelson, L. and Taylor, W. G. (2016) 'Coaches' perceptions of formal elite coach education in the UK.' Paper presented at the *SHAPE America National Coaching Conference*, Seattle, United States of America. 21st to 23rd June 2016.

Kolić, P., Groom, R., Nelson, L. and Taylor, W. G. (2016) 'From outsider to insider: Researcher's reflections of ethnographical observations of high performance coach education programs in the UK.' Poster presented at the *SHAPE America National Coaching Conference*, Seattle, United States of America. 21st to 23rd June 2016.

Kolić, P., Groom, R., Nelson, L. and Taylor, W. G. (2016) 'The perceived value of the UKCC CL4 programme: Coaches' perceptions and values.' Paper presented at the *Coaching as Global Endeavour UKCC Level 4 Conference*, Edinburgh, United Kingdom. 8th and 9th March 2016.

Kolić, P., Groom, R., Nelson, L. and Taylor, W. G. (2015) 'High performance coach learning: Scoping and mapping the literature (2003 – 2014).' Paper presented at the *3rd Biannual International Coaching Conference*, Crewe, United Kingdom. 9th and 10th September 2015.

Kolić, P., Groom, R., Nelson, L. and Taylor, W. G. (2015) 'High performance coach education: Scoping and mapping the literature (2003 – 2014).' Paper presented at the *10th ICCE Global Coach Conference*, Vierumäki, Finland. 23rd to 25th August 2015.

Insights gained from this research will be disseminated at the following events:

Kolić, P. and Taylor, W. G. (2018) 'The impact of high performance coach education: The case of the British Canoeing UKCC Coach Level 4 award.' Final research report presented at the British Canoeing Level 4 Board Meeting, Nottingham, United Kingdom. 30th August 2018.

Kolić, P. and Taylor, W. G. (2018) 'The impact of high performance coach education: The case of the UKCC Coach Level 4 award.' Final research report presented to UK Coaching, Leeds, United Kingdom. 8th August 2018.